

are shattered. That is their system, they can vote the way they believe. That is why I come back to Bill C-133 and some of the Hon. Members opposite who, I believe, feel the same as I do about it. I paid the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) the justified compliment of saying that his speech was one of the more courageous, comprehensive and constructive speeches that I have heard since I have been a Member of Parliament. The point is, Mr. Speaker, when you get an issue like Bill C-133, it boils down to a simple but very challenging word, that of trust.

Before six o'clock I said it was ironic that we are discussing this Bill and its betrayal of the trust of people who have served this country better than perhaps a lot of Members or a lot of other Canadians across this land, that is the retired public servants. It is ironic because it was the Prime Minister who, two or three weeks ago, went on national television to talk about trust. You cannot have the Prime Minister of the land, in an interesting television performance, come on and ask Canadians to trust in Government, trust six and five, trust a Canadian, when the people who have served the country feel betrayed by Bill C-133. It just does not sell. And those are my words.

I could stay silent on this Bill. While I have a number of retired public servants in my riding because the Annapolis Valley is a nice place to retire to, the numbers are rather few in relation to the many thousands across this land. So it would have been easy for me to stay silent on this Bill. But, as I said before six o'clock, unless Members start to heed the example of the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier and say what they feel, we are just kidding ourselves in our attempts to reform the House of Commons. Unless Members can reform their own performance, all the technical changes in the rules will mean very, very little. Because of television, the public can tune in to what goes on here. Because they are better educated than they were 20 or 30 years ago they are starting to expect Members of Parliament to speak about their belief in a cause. If they do not believe in the cause, let them shut up and sit down. This is one of the reasons why there is this alienation between the public forum of this Parliament of Canada and the public out there who wonder who is speaking for them.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, as humbly as I can, that Bill C-133 to me crystalizes the issue which the Prime Minister talked about. I thought it was a relatively good performance on television, regardless of the partisan aspect where I could say he did not say too much in a concrete way. But his one message was trust. Trust me. Trust Canadians. And is it not a paradox that the one Canadian he is not going to trust is the retired public servant who has worked in many cases at a sub-par income level and in many cases has a sub-par pension level.

● (2010)

These are the people who feel betrayed by the leader of the land. We are not talking about the fat cats of the land; we are talking about retired public servants whose average pension is \$6,900, and that is below the poverty line. They contributed to

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that pension from their salaries when they were working. These individuals, without form, without face, having given service, are supposed to be the front-line fighters in the trenches because the economic conditions in the country are very, very difficult today. We all understand that difficulty, Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier quoted some words that the Prime Minister had used in an address to a pensions conference. I should like to read from a letter which is about trust. It shows why I think this matter is so fundamental. The letter is dated October 12, 1977. It is addressed to a Mr. Power, who at that time was national President of the Union of National Defence Employees, and it is signed by the Prime Minister. I will read the letter in its entirety. But I want to bring the last paragraph in particular to your attention as that is the one on which I will make my case. The letter begins as follows:

Dear Mr. Power: Thank you for your telegram of September 27.

By the way, this telegram was sent because there was a question at that time about the right or the policy of indexing public service pensions. It continues as follows:

I have noted your concern that the indexation of government pensions be maintained.

In our society, pensions provide a means of sharing risk so that we can retire in reasonable security and dignity, without fear of the future. Protecting pensions from inflation by indexing them to increases in the cost of living should be an integral part of our pension schemes. Indexing does not give pensioners an increasingly larger claim on our economy's production, that is, more money to buy things they could not earlier afford. Rather, indexing merely enables pensioners to maintain, roughly, their same standard of living.

Even a modest rate—

This was written in 1977, when we did not have the ravage of inflation that we have today. It went on:

Even a modest rate of inflation destroys, at a devastating rate, the buying power of people on fixed incomes. Pensioners are out of the work-force and cannot bargain or strike for larger incomes. They are not the cause of inflation; they are its victim. We have an obligation to help protect them.

I have asked my staff to send a copy of our correspondence to the President of the Treasury Board, the Honourable Robert Andras.

In the remarks that I made before six o'clock this evening, I said that if there is any one Bill that is a blot on the social conscience of the Liberal Party, it is Bill C-133 which attacks pensioners who are out of the work-force, who cannot defend themselves and who will never again be able to negotiate or strike or make up what they are going to lose through the capping of a pension to which they contributed and which they were told—in contract form—was theirs.

This hocus-pocus on the part of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) of playing around with one half of one per cent to try to get some of the mental gymnasts, in the parliamentary sense, to come on board, is not only all heart, it is a complete and total sham.

We have all heard that a woman cannot be half pregnant; she has to be pregnant or not. There either is a principle and a contract that cannot be changed unless there is consultation, or there is no principle involved here. You cannot play around