

Private Members' Business

There is a third issue, and it has been addressed by the member. That is the issue of double, triple and in one case of an hon. member, quadruple dipping. There is one person and we all know who he is, who is a quadruple dipper, if that is a word. He is not a former Liberal member and he is not a former Conservative member. I will let you guess which party he used to belong to, having eliminated the previous two.

I do not say that to denigrate the person. I did not bring up this topic today to start with. We must keep in mind what we are doing. What if we decide that someone cannot receive a government pension and a salary at the same time—

• (1800)

An hon. member: Erik Nielsen.

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Let me think a bit more to see if we can figure out who is—

Mr. Boudria: I can answer that question, Mr. Speaker, Erik Nielsen is definitely not a New Democrat.

I want to conclude my remarks by saying to members that I do not object to this motion, but the sanctimonious platitudes we heard at the beginning of this debate do not do much to advance the debate.

Let us be proud of our occupation. I am very proud to be an MP. I come, as members will know, from very humble beginnings. I started here on Parliament Hill, and I have said before, as a bus boy 26 years ago. I am very proud of what I have managed to achieve with, of course, the consent of my electors in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and I want to continue to represent them.

More than anything, I want other Canadians to be able to climb that ladder as well and to get here in the future. I am already here, but that is not the case for many other Canadians. They too should have the right to aspire to come to this place, to what Mr. Diefenbaker called the highest court in the land, the Parliament of Canada. It is the place, if I can conclude, where there is no greater honour for a Canadian than to represent his or her fellow citizens than in this Chamber.

I believe that. Let us ensure that when we talk about this issue or anything else like it, we keep that in mind.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, in fact honoured, to contribute to this debate tonight in support of the motion of my colleague, the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway.

I agree that the issue of pensions of members of Parliament is a very hot topic. The telephones ring in constituency offices whenever there is a newspaper article or an ad about this issue.

I think what has to be said is that the urgency of this issue is very real. We have heard so much about the cynicism that is directed toward politicians. Believe me, this issue feeds that cynicism.

As an aspiring member of Parliament, I did not know about the provisions of the pension plan when I was running for office. I did not know that it was a very generous pension plan. I do not take issue that there should be a generous benefit package for members of Parliament. In supporting this motion that was put forward by my colleague from Burnaby—Kingsway and addressed in the House by my leader on February 24 of this year, has ignited the debate on this issue.

When my leader broke the unwritten vow of silence on February 24 it really did ignite the issue. It signalled that it was not going to be business as usual in this place under her leadership. We mean to do things differently. We are an alternative.

It is not that we are sanctimonious as some would suggest. It means we believe that if there is cynicism in the electorate, it is there for a reason, that we have to take some responsibility in addressing that cynicism.

That is why an independent, non-partisan commission to deal with the issues of MPs' pensions and salaries would be a non-contentious issue. Why not? It seems so sensible. It would take away the vision of MPs sitting behind closed doors making nice little deals for themselves so that they can secure a nice future for themselves and their families.

I know the sacrifices we make in this place, in this job. We all know it. We volunteered for these jobs. Nobody twisted your arm. If you do not like it, get out of the way and make room for those 32-year old women who were referred to in the previous speech because then there would be a real change in the way things are done.