

The Reform Act of 1830 in Britain was passed to do essentially three things and it is part of our Constitution in Canada. It was passed to widen the franchise to enable more people in Britain to participate in the democratic process. It was also passed to do away in large measure with what were called rotten boroughs and to enable different constituencies to have equivalent representation or close to it in the British House of Commons. Also it was to give salaries to members of Parliament in Britain so that not only the rich could be MPs. Not only the rich. That is an important issue.

The member across keeps heckling that is salaries. A salary is part of what an MP gets to do his or her job in this place.

Some years ago when the same Mr. Somerville put one of his ads in the newspaper I challenged him. I appeared in a television debate with him. I demonstrated to him that I had served as a civil servant for many years and when I had withdrawn from the civil service pension plan I was forced, and I say forced, to withdraw my contributions to the plan.

Miss Grey: You cannot do that with this.

Mr. Boudria: Yes, as a matter of fact one has to withdraw their contribution if one has not reached the amount required to obtain a benefit. The member is completely wrong.

I was forced to withdraw my contributions to the plan without interest, or I think I received 2 per cent. That was in 1981 when the interest rate was something like 18 per cent but I received 2 per cent on the money I had invested. I put that in a registered retirement account.

I debated with Mr. Somerville and said: "Mr. Somerville, I will make a deal with you. If you think my MP pension plan is so great, you can run against me in my riding and if you think your plan is so great maybe the people will vote for you. Alternatively, I challenge you to do the following. Let us calculate it and see, Mr. Somerville, if a registered retirement savings plan given to MPs—which is what he was advocating at the time with employer–employee contributions—"would be richer or poorer than what we have now". I challenged him. I said: "Do it for me. If your plan ends up being better than what I would get out of a retirement plan of the kind we now have for MPs, I will resign". It was the opposite. In fact I could easily demonstrate that in my case I lost quite a bit.

• (1045)

Miss Grey: Is the challenge still on?

Mr. Boudria: The member across used figures selectively a while ago. When referring to the member for Kingston and the Islands she said that he was eligible for a given amount of pension, therefore this was an unfunded liability of some millions of dollars, which she demonstrated.

Supply

That is hopelessly wrong for a number of reasons and members across know it. First of all, the unfunded liability is based on two premises. One, that the person would retire immediately and live until age 75, which may be the case. Of course, not too many members have resigned yet today even though it so-called trough day for 52 of them.

Miss Grey: They qualify now. It is kick-in day.

Mr. Boudria: If the member across will stop interrupting just for a minute or so, she will know that the second proposition is even more important. That is the fact that the whole unfunded liability business is based on the assumption that no new member would ever be re-elected to make contributions toward the plan.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): It is so different now that we are Liberal, eh? Now that we are government.

Mr. Boudria: I do not know what the people across are advocating, but I personally am not proposing to end parliamentary democracy in Canada today. I would imagine that whatever plan there is, there will be new people to contribute to it and that the unfunded liability is just a bunch of nonsense perpetrated by Mr. Somerville and now—

Miss Grey: Do you challenge Mr. Somerville again today?

Mr. Boudria: I have challenged Somerville many times. I have debated him on television. Members across have seen this.

Mr. Ramsay: Unsuccessfully.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Now that we are government things have changed.

Mr. Boudria: That is not to say that we should not amend the member of Parliament retirement plan. As a matter of fact, in the book "Creating Opportunity", we have said the following:

[Translation]

The pension regime of members of Parliament has been the focus of considerable controversy. It is now the subject of an independent review.

Members opposite asked what the government is waiting for. Two studies were ordered: one, under the previous government, was the statutory review conducted after each election, and the other one was done by the former Prime Minister. We were waiting for the results of these two studies. We have received them, and the Prime Minister said he would table amendments in the House.

I will read some more from the red book:

It is now the subject of an independent review, which Liberals support. We believe that reform is necessary.

Whatever the results of the independent review, a Liberal government will reform the pension plan of members of Parliament to end "double dipping". Members of Parliament should not be able to leave office and receive a pension from the federal government if they accept a new full-time paying job from the federal government.