

Supply

Where did he get the idea from? Somebody said from the red book. Why is it that it took the Reform Party to draw to the attention of the members opposite the fact that the people in our constituencies, and I submit in their constituencies as well, were upset in a very major way over that act? It is still totally deficient.

It comes as absolutely no surprise to me that members opposite are equally out of touch over the issue of MPs' pensions.

The member opposite asks why don't I read the red book. I talked about needing things to put people to sleep. That is an excellent idea. The red book, in my humble judgment, is a catch all of just about everything written in so much bafflegab that you can actually make it appear as though what the finance minister is doing and must be done, and that is to get the deficit and the debt under control, was actually part of their platform.

Every single Liberal member whom I have asked: "Did you in the election in 1993 stand up and say that the deficit must be brought under control? We must take a look at all aspects of the economy". The answers all were: "Well, it's in the red book".

This is exactly the same thing. We have brought this topic to the floor of the House of Commons for the simple reason that the people of Canada expect better from the politicians they elected. We are here to drive, to push, this monolithic giant of 177 seats and the Prime Minister and the cabinet ministers to finally, after 400 days do what the Prime Minister said he was going to do 400 days ago.

He said it would only take one day to do it. What happened? Why is it so much easier for the Liberal government to blow away \$5 billion worth of work on EH-101 helicopters? Why is it so easy for the Liberal cabinet to blow away hundreds of millions of dollars of work on the Pearson airport deal, and yet it cannot do a simple thing like change the MPs' pensions?

The thing I find the most frustrating, and I realize that I have already said it, is this. I agree with the member for Halifax that this job is one of the most exciting, one of the most worthwhile things that anybody in the House could possibly be involved in as far as their work is concerned. I do not disagree with her for one second that virtually every member of the House puts in hours from 7 in the morning until 10, 11 or 12 o'clock at night and keeps on serving the people of Canada. I do not disagree with that for a second.

I agree with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell that this is an honourable calling. Why will the government not listen to what the ordinary citizen is saying? My colleague from Kootenay West—Revelstoke has pointed out that he worked for 22 and a half years in the pressure cooker of being an air traffic controller. After all that time he qualified for a \$17,000 pension.

The person he replaced worked his nine years as a member of Parliament and he qualified instantly for a \$27,000 pension.

• (1325)

Why is it so difficult for the Liberals to understand the extreme hostility there is toward us as we work hard on behalf of Canadians, as we work hard on behalf of our constituents? Why can they not understand that this is the one barrier that stands between us and our constituents? Why could they not have made the changes? We do not seem to get any answers.

The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell quoted from the *Hill Times* in February 1992. We all know being in Ottawa that the *Hill Times* is a fine paper and puts out all the facts as they should be and is well received every Thursday with all the factual documentation that there is in the paper. However it is a paper that is read only or almost exclusively by people who are involved with the Chamber in one way or another and to quote an editorial in support of obscene pensions is just beyond the pale.

What he should have been reading from are the editorials from the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Calgary Herald*, the *Ottawa Sun*. I can go on and on. This must be changed and it should have been changed 400 days ago.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to address the subject of MPs pensions today but my perspective has changed over the last year and I want to describe the change for members.

Just one year ago I campaigned long and hard against the gold-plated pension plans that members receive, which was easy to do since I was not at that time eligible to receive one. Today I stand in a far different position.

For a year now, I have experienced the trials of living far from home and family, the extra expenses of being a member of Parliament and the very demanding schedule that an MP must follow. In short, my whole heart and soul has been required of me this past year.

Members would be right to ask if my perspective has been altered by this reality. Under the current system, if I remain here in the House for five more years, I will be eligible to receive a pension. I am not alone. Over 200 new members will be eligible for an incredibly generous pension after just six years.

Most of these new members campaigned to change the pension plan, a task we could accomplish today if our resolve for change is not softened in one short year. While my perspective has changed over the last year, I have certainly not lost my desire for reform. I still believe that our pension plan needs change. Change at the top is essential to provide an example for the rest of the nation. I want to make a few proposals today that would bring our pensions out of fantasyland and into the real world.