

Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act (No. 2)

I see no reason why I should carry on any further with regard to this matter. I think it is incredible that we should have to take up the time of the House on this particular Bill when it is such a ridiculous Bill. Naturally, I will be voting against it, I know that the whole Conservative Party will be voting against it. I hope some Hon. Members opposite—and I know that they will—will be voting against it. Maybe it will be an opportunity for us to defeat the Government, who knows? Maybe some great people like the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) will come up with some amendment so that we may be able to carry this matter on for another two or three months. If that is what the House wants, then maybe this is how we will carry on.

The Minister has taken away the full Family Allowance benefits by deindexation. Now the Government is affecting the senior citizens of this country. My, who will it be next? I cannot believe what I am seeing. The Government has even taken away lottery funds from the poor fitness and amateur sport people, the people in the sporting industry. The federal Government has taken \$90 million from the Provinces' lotteries. Does Your Honour know where it put the money? It was put into the Consolidated Revenue Fund to look after other expenditures while the poor people in the sports organizations are looking for bucks. They cannot get their money. Moneys were promised for the University Games in Edmonton but have not been received. The Olympic Association is looking for money; it does not have any. If these events were being held in Quebec, let me tell you there would be a change and a different atmosphere over there. The moneys would be coming *tout de suite*.

Mr. Lapointe: No.

Mr. Paproski: Oh, yes. The Minister says "No". I know, because I see the way you guys operate—

Mr. Lapointe: You just show your bias.

Mr. Paproski:—over on that other side. Do not tell me it will not.

Miss Bégin: Racist!

Mr. Paproski: Do not call me a racist, either. Do not dare call me a racist.

Miss Bégin: Racism.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Remarks should be addressed to the Chair.

Mr. Paproski: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I do not want to get the Ministers, hot and heavy, but I have been around here long enough to know just exactly what happens. They who scream the loudest, and they who form the largest majority in the Party which governs, particularly my friends opposite from la belle province, do not hesitate to get their funds.

I will end my speech by saying that we intend to vote against the Government, and particularly against this Bill.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend a few moments discussing the amendment to the Bill. As most people know, the Bill ignores the basic rights of civil service pensioners who have paid for the indexing of benefits and who thought they had a contract. Indeed, it was understood, in negotiations back as far as the 1960s, that a contract existed between the Government and civil servants with regard to pensions.

It has been pointed out by various unions for the civil service that in the 1960s it was suggested that superannuation be excluded from collective bargaining by the Government. In return, they were promised that there would be no unilateral changes to the program. An advisory committee was established and, up until the present time, the Government, under two different parties, has been keeping up those promises. However, we are now seeing a change in policy, a breaking of a contract, if you like, so that even though pensioners had paid for it, indexing to keep up with the cost of living would no longer be there.

Simply so that we can study the matter in its proper perspective, we should remind ourselves that indexing was always "after the fact" indexing. We waited until the end of the year to find out how much inflation had run amuck in the previous year and then, in the coming year, the pension would be increased by that amount. That basic tenet is being ignored in this Bill and an amendment which would not only break a social contract, but would also amount to a tax on senior citizens.

The Government of Canada should maintain the contract with pensioners of all types that there will be no excessive taxation of their benefits, because in the main they comprise a fairly low income group. In recent times of high inflation, it has been very difficult for pensioners to keep up with the cost of living. This kind of procedure would have the effect of adding what would amount to a tax on senior citizens, in this case pensioners who have previously worked for the civil service. It would amount to a tax because it would reduce the amount of money to which they were entitled, a tax deducted before they even received their pensions. The deduction would amount to the difference between the real inflation rate and the 6 per cent proposed in the Bill or the 6.5 per cent in the amendment.

The only place where the case of pensioners can be heard is in this House of Commons. That is why this Party has been holding up proceedings on the Bill. We say that this is the pensioners' last chance. Retirees do not have organizations or unions which can speak for them. They rely on their elected representatives to look after their needs, and not all of them are paying attention.

I want to point out that we probably would not have found ourselves in this mess had we in the Opposition collectively, both Parties together, stood up more strongly against Bill C-124 which introduced the six and five set of guidelines in the beginning. There were enough votes in Opposition—

Mr. McKinnon: Nonsense.