

minutes ago, I have heard apologists for the MPs' gold-plated pension plan say that we need something like this to attract "good people" to Ottawa.

I doubt very many members would admit that they were motivated to come here in order to rip off their fellow countrymen. I am sure that if the question were placed on an individual basis, the terms most often heard would be civic responsibility or love of country.

Unfortunately, anyone who favours this outrageous dip into the public trough is by definition suspect, and those members opposite who defend the system are dirtying the reputations of all of us by their actions. Everyone in this place is touched by this national scandal, regardless of his or her personal stand on the matter.

• (1540)

A little over a year ago when I made my little pilgrimage across Wellington Street to sign on at pay and services, I also signed a simple, hand written document regarding the pension. It said, in part: "I have no wish to receive nor will I accept any benefits". My contributions to the plan are still being deducted at source because the Prime Minister, in spite of his repeated hollow assurances that opting out will be permitted, has declined to act because he did not want to embarrass or inconvenience the 52 cochons de lait who made their way to the trough yesterday.

Why did I and about a dozen others, of whom I am aware, make that particular form of protest? I certainly did not do it because I do not like money. I am not a hair-shirted masochist and I am definitely not well-to-do. I did it because my mother taught me not to steal.

I submit that an elected body in control of its own finances which concocts a scheme through which its members can collect six or seven taxpayer dollars for every dollar that they contribute is involved in something for which an ordinary Bay Street promoter would be sent to prison.

The suggestion that to attract quality MPs they must be bribed with a golden parachute is patronizing and insulting. Some of our greatest parliamentarians, besides working virtually *ex gratia*, had to return to their day jobs when they retired or were defeated. They knew what to expect when they ran for office. They did not sit back and say: "Oh dear me, no, I could never run for office. I need security".

People with visions of sugar plums dancing in their heads would be precisely the sort of people we would not want in this place. Can anyone imagine John Diefenbaker or Stanley Knowles, when contemplating their first run for office saying: "What's in it for me?"

The non-pension generations forged a nation. They guided Canada through depressions and two world wars and then like

Supply

other citizens they relied partly on personal savings and partly on the professions, trades or businesses to which they returned. Does anyone seriously contend that they were inferior to the current crop of legislators, that they were less worthy than members of the Bloc who will receive pensions for trying to destroy the country?

At this point I must confess I am going to get a little off track from some of my colleagues. I support this motion because the adoption would lead to major improvements in the pension scheme. However, if I had my druthers there would be no MP pension scheme at all. Since RRSPs became available, people willing to save diligently have been able to build up modest retirement nest eggs.

In my own case, because I am forced to contribute my \$1 in \$6 to this goody bag, I have to stop adding to my RRSP. Surely MPs with annual salaries and benefits equivalent to about \$100,000 in the real world should have enough wit to be able to manage an honest retirement package. I should be allowed to do so.

We are entrusted with running a country, or at least that is the theory around here. Are we so dependent and ineffectual that we cannot provide for our own old age without participating in a scam?

In conclusion, in addition to putting a lid on the trough, existing pensions should be retroactively adjusted in the interest of fairness. I do not suggest that anyone be forced to make restitution on money already received, but anyone already drawing a pension should be cut off until he or she reaches age 65. At 65, the monthly payments should be adjusted to reflect a fair return on actual contributions and nothing more.

• (1545)

In this country retroactive legislation to relieve governments of contractual obligations is nothing new. The only novelty in my proposal is that it would be aimed at politicians instead of the public. Saskatchewan did retroactive financial legislation with the GRIP. Alberta did it in order to tear up royalty agreements. This 35th Parliament has already done it once and would have done it twice if the sleepy folks in the other place had not woken up and intervened.

Remember I am not, I repeat not suggesting that MP pensioners be deprived of a fair return on investment. I am suggesting that they be prohibited from further looting the public treasury.

The person I replaced here was an ineffective and rarely heard backbencher. He served nine years in this place. He is 53 years old and is currently raking in \$27,000 a year to augment his income as a practising lawyer. If he lives to age 75 he will have collected over a million dollars. During the 1993 election campaign he made it clear that he would take every nickel that was on the table. That might be one of the reasons he came within 100 votes of losing his deposit. People opposite who are so intent on getting their snouts filled should perhaps bear that