

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 9, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT RETIRING ALLOWANCES ACT

The House resumed from June 8 consideration of Bill C-85, an act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act and to provide for the continuation of a certain provision, as reported (without amendment) from the committee; and on Motions Nos. 1 to 7.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to debate Bill C-85, the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, and the amendments the government proposes. I am doing it in the short time that remains, given the closure and time allocation tactics of the government.

The amendments to the bill submitted under my name and under the name of the member for Calgary Centre have four main functions. First, to bring the members of Parliament pension plan into line with the private sector, both for MPs and Senators. Second, to allow MPs in this and in all future Parliaments to fully opt out of the pension plan. Third, to impose a Canadian citizenship requirement on all plan members. Fourth, to subject members pensions to the same clawback provisions that exist to old age security, something the Liberal government had opposed when it was in opposition but now seems to believe is fully acceptable for ordinary Canadians.

We are debating the first set of motions. Motion No. 4 provides that if a province separated, members of Parliament from that province would not automatically draw a pension from the Canadian government. This is the effect of proposing a citizenship requirement. We will be very interested to see whether it is the intention of the government to guarantee

pensions to members who eventually may not be citizens of the country.

I have heard some comments from members of the separatist party in the House that they do not care what is happening in the House because they will not be here in the fall anyway. I happen to think they are wrong and they may be here much longer. In any case this raises an interesting question.

[*Translation*]

It is because the members of the Bloc Quebecois are insisting that Quebec is going to separate in the coming year, I suppose.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): This amendment in fact reveals the strength of their convictions on this objective.

Bloc members' intention to guarantee their own Canadian pension or participate in this retirement pension plan indicates a lack of confidence in the possibility of separation. I suppose there is an element of sacrifice in the sovereignty project. Interestingly enough, the Bloc Quebecois is proposing putting Quebecers in a position to lose the benefits of Confederation, including pension benefits, but is pushing here for the adoption of the Parliament's pension plan.

I would suggest that one way to show their good faith in the matter would be to vote for this amendment and to support the idea that things like pensions need to be negotiated, if, by chance, Quebec should really separate after the referendum.

[*English*]

It will be interesting. I doubt the Bloc will be prepared to take such a daring step in the House of Commons.

The effect of Motions Nos. 1 and 6 are to change the opting out provisions so members of future Parliaments can make a one time decision to opt in or out of the plan during the first 60 days the House sits after they are elected. Reform MPs will save taxpayers over \$38 million by opting out and clearly in the absence of substantive changes to the plan future parliamentarians must have this option as well.

• (1010)

We will keep in mind that the failures of the government are starting to add up. While it may reject some of the populist measures used by my party I expect the next federal election to