

Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act (No. 2)

strengthen the Canadian dollar so that industries can invest. I should like to emphasize also, for the information of Hon. members, that the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the Minister, who is present today in the House, have set up task forces which, in consultation with representatives of the private sector and the various industries, are seeking very positive ways and means not to create jobs, but to encourage both Canadian and foreign interests to invest in Canada and thus create jobs.

Our meetings with these economic agents have led to the following conclusion: all these economic agents demand as a prerequisite that we wrestle inflation to the ground. Personally, I am eager to fight unemployment. But it is impossible to create jobs when our currency is worthless. It would be like asking a farmer to sow his fields with sterile seeds. Nobody will agree to work for money that is worthless. Money must retain its value, and that is why the government, at the request of economic agents and other groups, decided to fight inflation first and foremost. We are making progress already. The inflation rate is coming down, which shows that the policies of the Government of Canada are working. Then, after inflation has been brought under control, new investments will be made. And if the Hon. Member does not believe in Canada's future, let him consider what is happening in the United States. He should find comfort in the realization that investments have already started again there.

● (1210)

[English]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Hon. Member's answer and I just have a follow-up question for him. If he is concerned about the attitude of the investment community about creating long-term jobs, if the blue chip committee which is in place to advise the Government was to recommend the abandonment of the six and five program at this point, if the bankers of Canada who obviously have a sensitivity toward investment in the country were also to advise abandonment of the program at this point, would the Hon. Member admit that it is perhaps time to withdraw the six and five program as it applies to senior citizens of Canada, mothers and children of Canada and to retired Armed Forces, RCMP and civil servants?

[Translation]

Mr. Maltais: Mr. Speaker, I would point out first of all that the 6 and 5 program is voluntary for Canada as a whole. It is compulsory for the Canadian Government because the salaries and benefits paid by the Government represent approximately 40 per cent of total Government expenditures. This is why the Canadian Government has made it compulsory for the federal Public Service and those who receive benefits under various programs. I believe that the private sector has already given encouraging support to the 6 and 5 program and would have agreed to much harsher measures to reduce the increases in

welfare and old age security benefits as well as Public Service pensions.

We are already protecting our senior citizens and public servants with the 6 and 5 program. If we had listened to the private sector which favoured much more drastic action than the Government, we would perhaps now find ourselves with a situation somewhat similar to that which prevails in Quebec, with rollbacks of 20 per cent and so on. Members of Parliament were against such action and were in favour of the most basic of equity for Canadian citizens and recipients of Government benefits and this is why we have a 6 and 5 program. Moreover, I would like to remind Hon. Members that the 6 and 5 program was viewed as an unacceptable policy at the time of the meeting of federal and provincial Ministers of Finance in Halifax last year and that the 6 and 5 program is now accepted by nearly everyone and that even public servants in various provinces and the federal Government agree with this policy of restrictions because it is much better than the policy of minus 20 per cent applied by certain irresponsible people.

[English]

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I have two or three questions for the Hon. Member as well. He mentioned that he supported Petro-Canada. Does he support the fact that they have spent thousands of dollars to construct an office building in Calgary and that scores of those offices have been empty for several weeks? Would it not have been better to spend that money on senior citizens, old age pensioners and retired civil servants who are unable to defend themselves?

[Translation]

Mr. Maltais: Mr. Speaker, I do not claim the Government is always one hundred percent right, but I would like to examine the case proposed by the Hon. Member before answering. Since I do not know all the details I would rather not reply, but I am prepared to examine them if they are given to me.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to this House that both sides have now been asking questions back and forth for nearly twenty minutes. Granted, it is an important and very interesting debate, but we are now considering an amendment to Bill C-133 and I wish Hon. Members would debate it because the time allowed is limited. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, the House could consider the Government legislation and proceed with the reading of the next motion. I do not see anyone rising, so I presume the House will pass on to motion No. 4.

[English]

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, as a courtesy, I wonder if the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) might allow one more question.

I wonder if the Hon. Member for Manicouagan (Mr. Maltais) is at all concerned that those opinion-makers in the