

Government Orders

I am amazed by the argument that the Reform Party is objecting to the Liberal plan simply because it does not like it. I would like to back up our comments with a number of letters from our constituents.

For example, let me quote from a letter from Mrs. Marjorie Hernstedt of Williams Lake, who wrote:

Chrétien promised to reform the outrageous pension plan. I am a pensioner and this past July, the government couldn't afford to give us our two-dollar raise. I live on the pensioners' pension and Canada pension with very careful budgeting. The whole outlook is grossly unfair and I urge you, Mr. Mayfield, to demand Parliament bring MPs' pensions into line with what is available in the private sector.

How can any of us justify a pension like the one in Bill C-85 when there are people like Mrs. Hernstedt who are barely making ends meet on their own pensions?

Is it not ironic while MPs are getting their pensions that Mrs. Hernstedt and others like her are being told that the government cannot afford a \$2 raise in pension benefits. The irony is just sickening.

Also Mr. Don Ford of Quesnel feels that politicians have to be willing to make sacrifices and play a part in cutting government expenditures. He said:

The pensions of members of Parliament should be based on their contributions as a percentage of their salary, to the point of their retirement at age 65, a percentage in line with the average Canadian middle income worker, and that they be eligible to start receiving the earned pension after reaching the age of 65 years, and not when they are defeated in an election.

• (1550)

We are not simply speaking on our own behalf; we are representing our constituents. Mr. Ford touched on a theme heard over and over again in the House: the MP pension plan has to be brought into line with what is seen in the private sector.

I should also like to mention what some of the media people are saying. Barbara Yaffe of the *Vancouver Sun* had the following to say about the MP pension plan:

British Columbians are not amused. The corpulent cats who remain in the plan in future will get nearly four tax dollars for every one dollar they put in, while the MPs with guts and principles get zip. Those who opt out deserve real credit. The weasels who stay in deserve our enmity.

Those are very strong words: corpulent cats and weasels. These are the kinds of words that come from Canadians when asked what they think of politicians who opt into the pension plan.

An article by Bob Cox of *Canadian Press* stated the following:

A proposed leaner pension plan for MPs is still four to seven times more generous than what other Canadians can earn, says an expert on politicians' pensions.

Though an improvement on the even richer existing plan, the Liberal proposal would still be worth \$60,000 before taxes—close to an MP's \$64,000 salary—The Canadian Taxpayers Federation agreed, putting 242 smiling, pink pigs on the vast

Parliament Hill lawn to represent MPs who have indicated they would stay in the new pension plan.

Canadians, not just Reform MPs, do not trust their members of Parliament to handle their own compensation. It is conflict of interest. It is like appointing a mouse to guard the cheese. The time has come to really reform the system.

One proposal that has received strong interest in Cariboo-Chilcotin was to appoint a volunteer committee to examine the pension plan of 10 companies at random on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Their pension plans would be averaged and the result would be the basis for the new MP pension plan. The plan would be reviewed occasionally and altered as needed, preferably by some neutral person like the auditor general. Others have put forward similar ideas.

If we as politicians are to regain the trust of Canadian people, we have to start right at the beginning with the MP pension plan. The best way to handle the issue is to have the electorate decide the compensation with the politicians out of the room. Anything less than this is an abuse of power on our part. It is conflict of interest and a betrayal of the trust Canadians place in their members of Parliament.

In conclusion, at a time when the Canadian pension plan is on the verge of bankruptcy, when over one million Canadians are out of work and many more are barely making ends meet, we are being asked to approve a pension that would turn average MPs into the comfortably well off in only six years.

As a member of Parliament I cannot support the package, especially when there are so many Canadians without any pension at all. Therefore I will be voting against Bill C-85 at third reading and I will be opting out of the pension plan if it passes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 8, 1995, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 78 it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): In my opinion the yeas have it.