

Adjournment Debate

Of course I remain ever optimistic, Mr. Speaker, I was born that way, but I am also among those who would like to know just where the Government stands on this issue.

As Hon. Members may recall, the Minister told me recently that he had managed to negotiate in a spirit of co-operation and to find responsible solutions in the pension case. In answer to a question I directed to him on March 10, 1985, more than a year ago, he said: As soon as Mr. Samson, the former president of the Alliance, or the representatives are prepared to sit down with me again, they can call me. This is rather strange. First he tells us: I am negotiating, I have been successful, I am about to announce something. Then he turns around and says: Well, I am waiting for them to call me and tell me what is going on.

Quite obviously, Mr. Speaker, the Government has had plenty of time to study the matter. For over a year now I have been regularly asking questions on this subject. Could the Parliamentary Secretary tell us tonight in this House what the Government's plan is concerning the pensions of retired civil servants?

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communication): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that my hon. friend is still optimistic about this. So is the Government and so am I.

● (2220)

[English]

I am pleased to be able to speak on the Government's progress on the issue of Public Service pension reform. The Government is well aware that to some observers the process appears to be slow. However, because of the complexity of the issues and because we recognize that pensions is an area of such importance and financial consequence, we have chosen a cautious and thorough approach.

The first step toward placing Public Service pension plans on a sound financial basis for all time was to conduct an actuarial examination of the superannuation accounts. Second, a wide variety of options was explored to give effect to the principles upon which the reforms were to be based. The objective of this exercise was, of course, to have a clear picture of the nature of the problems so that they could be addressed in their entirety. Since the solutions to the controversy surrounding Public Service pensions must be acceptable to pensioners, plan members, other employees who sponsor pension plans and Canadian taxpayers, the concerns of all these groups have to be examined in light of the various options for reform.

As the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) has previously reported to this House, independent actuarial advice

has been received by the Government and the Public Service unions on behalf of Public Service Superannuation Act plan members. These reports have been referred to the Advisory Committee on the Public Service Superannuation Act and have been reviewed by members.

Preliminary discussions have been held with management of the Armed Forces and of the RCMP on how the reforms will affect their pension arrangements. In other words, the necessary groundwork has been done and the formal consultative process with the President of the Treasury Board's advisory committee is well under way. During this process, the details of the reform of Public Service pension arrangements, including indexation, are being worked out. Plan members may expect to hear a statement from the President of the Treasury Board in the near future.

With respect to the subject of Public Service pensioners, the President of the Treasury Board has often assured the House that in determining how the reforms apply to them, fairness and equity will be his guiding principles. He has repeatedly stated that the Government has not lost sight of the commitments made to pensioners in the past. I think it is fair to say that the President of the Treasury Board has gone further than any of his predecessors in that portfolio in recognizing the role which pensioners have to play in the development of Public Service pension policy.

From the beginning he assured pensioners of a continuing role by making it clear that they would be members of the Pension Management Board which will, in the future, manage the Public Service superannuation plan. The President has met with pensioner representatives and has been receptive to written representations from them. More important, he has appointed a pensioner representative to his Advisory Committee on the Public Service Superannuation Act, thus ensuring that in the consultative process the pensioner voice is strongly heard.

● (2225)

In conclusion, let me assure pensioners and indeed all Public Service pension plan members that an announcement on the details of the pension reform proposals may be expected soon and will have resulted from a consultative process in which their interests have been represented.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 10:26 p.m.