

Government Orders

No matter how they try to camouflage and wrap that truth, the truth will always be the truth. We know. That is not grasping at straws, that is stating fact. Fact sometimes gets in the way of Reform Party policy.

Reform Party MPs have said that the taxpayers of Canada contribute these huge amounts toward MPs' pensions. I have here the document tabled by the President of the Treasury Board. It is a report on the administration of the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. There is not one year since 1952 in which the contributions to the plan were less than the money going out of the plan in pensions—not one year.

• (1050)

Mr. Speaker, I will give you examples of various years. For instance, the total receipts for the year 1990–91 were \$7 million to the plan and the disbursements were \$6 million. The disbursements in 1989–90 were \$7 million, with \$6.3 million in withdrawals, and so on—total receipts, total disbursements.

When some members opposite claim that the amount creates a huge debt of some sort, that is factually incorrect and they know it. This report was tabled in the House by an officer of the government. It was designed to show these numbers. But they refuse to listen to that. They invent, they concoct numbers of their own, supported by the likes of David Somerville, whose claim to fame is to draw little pigs in newspapers. That is all they have to support their argument.

Between that and the nonsense we heard today that only some MPs should be entitled to a pension and others who have different political views, such as Bloc members, are not entitled, and that members should be able to get a military pension and an MP's salary but that other people should not get a pension, that is the kind of logic that works for Reform thinking but not for logical thinking.

[*Translation*]

It is time to inject an element of intellectual honesty into this debate. I am not ashamed of my salary as a member of Parliament, I earn it. If the voters of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell do not think I am worth this salary, they should not lower it, they should find someone who can do the job better, if that is what is required some day or other.

I say to the members opposite that, if they do not think they are earning their pay, they should work harder and not claim that salaries should be cut. If they are embarrassed about their lack of ability, they should improve their skills. If they are ashamed because they are not working hard enough, let them work a little harder for the voters who sent them here. I was elected by the voters in my riding to do my best, and that is what I intend to do so long as I am here.

That is what the members opposite should do instead of continuing to make Canadians believe things that are the opposite of the truth, to say the least.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thought it might not be necessary for me to speak to this bill on the parliamentarians' pension plan.

I have been a member of this House since 1984. I did not go into politics because of the pension but because I had a vision of the future. I did not run for Parliament because of the salary; I did not even know how much members made until after I was elected. So you can see, my first concern was not about salary and pension. It was to defend the public interest, the interests of the people of Longueuil, as well as my party's policies, which I believe in.

Since the Reform Party says that Bloc members should not receive a pension from the federal government if Quebec ever becomes sovereign, I wish to reiterate what I said on several occasions in response to English speaking journalists. I asked them if someone now working for a U.S. company, who has contributed to this company's pension fund for 10 or 15 years, will not be entitled to receive his pension from a U.S. company because he is Canadian.

I think that is the major issue in this case. I have been working for the Canadian government for 11 years. We as members are not employers, but we still work for the Canadian state, and the day Quebec becomes sovereign, I will have made my own contribution to a pension fund. I do not see how anyone can say today that I would not have the right to receive what I paid into this plan.

• (1055)

That is why I think that such statements are totally disloyal and a little twisted coming as they do from the Reform Party, and from some journalists who have often argued that it would not be legitimate for us to receive a pension should Quebec achieve sovereignty.

I am feeling very legitimate and very comfortable, because I have contributed to this pension fund and I am simply entitled to it, whether it comes from an American or Canadian company or from the Canadian government. I am entitled to it because I have already contributed to this fund for 11 years.

Whenever I hear talk of a gold-plated pension plan, I think that, as far as I know, the majority of people who go into politics do not come here for the fat pension we receive after we leave. Most politicians, at least those I know, did not go into politics for the pension fund; they came here to further the interests of their party and put forward what it stands for.

Such arguments do not seem valid to me, and I do not think that the Reform Party will score very many points by trying to give the public the impression that members of Parliament are overpaid and that their pensions are too generous. I think that this is of little concern to the people of Canada.