

Supply

different for them than for us. They do not receive any lucrative pension packages and neither should we.

Government members also argue, as has been discussed today in the House, that many members take large pay cuts, have given up lucrative careers and that we will not get good people coming to government unless we have these lucrative pension schemes.

I believe that good people will always come to the top and that money should not be the motivating factor to get into this job. If people are prepared to give up their professions in the name of public service then one is more assured that they will be honest in their intentions to serve the House and to serve the country.

Much has been said on pensions. The Prime Minister has promised that he will allow us to opt out and revamp the pension scheme. I challenge him to rise to the occasion and do this in the name of fiscal responsibility and also in the name of respect of the Canadian public.

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to share with members a little bit of history. This is not an issue which is new on the public agenda. For example in Saskatchewan in 1977 the then government of Allan Blakeney, who was a New Democratic Party premier, foresaw the problems of unfunded liability with respect to pensions for the civil service and also with respect to elected members of the legislature.

Before I get into that historical perspective, for a couple of minutes I want to say that I believe fundamentally that serving your country and serving the public is an honourable profession, whether you are an elected member of a legislature, of Parliament, or an employee of one of the provincial, municipal, or federal governments.

People want their elected representatives to be accountable, to have a pride in serving their country and to be compensated in a very satisfactory way so that we are responsible to those who pay our salary as opposed to having large incomes from secret sources or sources other than the taxpayers. If that is the case we become accountable to those who do pay our salaries.

• (1535)

The point I want to make in my intervention this afternoon is that I believe serving your country is extremely important and our compensation should be adequate. I believe that a pension system is part of a compensation package, it is deferred income. I also believe, however, that the pension system we have now is unfunded in terms of its liability for taxpayers, it is very costly, and I believe it has to be changed.

I do not just say this. I have undertaken some initiative to see some change. On September 21 I introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-270, which is the money purchase plan bill.

It calls for the Government of Canada to change the MPs' pension system from the defined benefit to the defined contribution plan of a money purchase. It would be fair. It would be effective. It would reduce the taxpayers' subsidy of pensions from \$7 to our \$1, to a more fair \$1 for \$1. We contribute a dollar, the employer contributes a dollar and it goes into an RRSP-like account, earns interest, and at the time of our selection to take the money we become eligible to purchase a joint spousal life annuity which then reduces the amount of pension that we have, depending on the age of our spouse if the spouse is younger than us.

This is something that is very important to me. To get back to my history comment, in Saskatchewan this type of plan was introduced—the defined contribution plan or money purchase plan—in 1979 for elected members of the Saskatchewan legislature. It has proven cost effective. It is the only pension plan for elected officials in the country that is endorsed by the Saskatchewan Taxpayers Association, by the Canadian Taxpayers Association, by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It is even endorsed by the National Citizens Coalition, to which some people may not be attracted but at least it is endorsed in the sense of it being fair, equitable for both taxpayers and members.

I maintain that this is an opportunity for the House of Commons. When the Prime Minister introduces his bill, we should look at my private member's bill, Bill C-270. It is modelled after the Saskatchewan plan which has been in effect for 15, almost 16, years. It would be a very effective approach to addressing some of the concerns of taxpayers.

I want to ask the member from the Reform Party whether he has seen the bill that I have tabled and whether his party would endorse such a plan which has been endorsed by many of the same associations which support his party.

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, no I have not seen the bill that the hon. member has mentioned. I would be very interested in seeing it and my party also, particularly in view of the comments my hon. friend made which basically echoed what we have been saying in this party before we were even elected.

Is it not curious that we find the New Democratic Party and the Reform Party and all of the other groups such close allies on this particular point, whereas the government for so long has basically put us off? I hope that the Prime Minister will listen to the comments just made by my hon. friend and to other comments that have been made here by my friends in this party. I hope that the Prime Minister will take them into consideration and rapidly bring forward a bill based on the constructive suggestions that have been made here today.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, from time to time, including about 15