

Mr. Beatty: It is the Government which is engaging in a heist.

Mr. Parker: The President of CP Rail, and this identifies the reason why CP Rail was brought into this dispute, headed the blue chip committee which recommended the six and five program and was selling it across Canada, while the Conservatives voted in the House to break contracts which were fully negotiated through mediation and so on.

Now we have a system and we supported the idea of the six month hoist and we will support the request of the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) but we will not support the change in indexing, regardless of whether it is six months down the road. Therefore, my question is: how can the Conservatives, on one hand, ask for a six month hoist for one proposal while, on the other, they stormed into the House and voted with the Liberals to bring in the very program which is now hurting the pensioners of Canada?

Mr. Nickerson: I thank the Hon. Member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke for his question. It appears that at least I listen to his speeches and he listens to mine. That is quite an improvement. I would be very pleased to explain to him what happened over the last two or three months with regard to the general process of restraint.

We on this side of the House agree that, wherever possible, the Government should restrain its expenditures. We dislike an ever-increasing deficit because we feel that that leads to inflation and, in the long run, to a lack of jobs. Therefore, when the Government, in its wisdom—and I say that advisedly—first put before the House the general concept of restraint on Government expenditures, we voted for that particular idea.

If Hon. Members will recall, Bill C-124, one of the first pieces of this companion legislation, was a Bill which reduced the salaries, indemnities, of Members of Parliament and their expense allowances and pensions, and we thought that if there was to be restraint, then we as Members of Parliament should take the lead. Therefore, we were in favour of the reduction in our own salaries. However, when it comes to public service pensioners, many of whom live on \$6,000, \$7,000 or \$8,000 a year and really cannot afford to take that decrease, whereas we are receiving \$50,000 a year or better, we feel that it is incumbent on us to protect their interests and not to let them be cut down by the Liberal Government opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Parker: I would like to ask a supplementary question, if I may. That appears to be the rationale, and my next question is: if the Conservative Party believes in free collective bargaining, why did they not, during that process, request that consultation or negotiation take place with these groups so that they could also be heard and understood? Then we probably would not be facing the very dictatorial way in which the Government is dealing with our Public Service pensioners.

Mr. Nickerson: I am very pleased to answer that question. The view put forward by the Hon. Member for Kootenay East-

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Revelstoke that there should have been consultations and negotiations at that time was, in fact, the substance of an amendment moved at that time on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party by the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton, who is leading this side in the debate.

Mr. Mazankowski: He has memory lapses.

Mr. Nickerson: And I remember speaking in strong support of that amendment myself. That was precisely the view taken by this side of the House, by this Party, that there should be negotiations, that the matter should be resolved in consultation with representatives of the public servants. Unfortunately, we were outvoted on that matter.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to make a brief comment and ask a question of the Hon. Member for Western Arctic. The Hon. Member has indicated his Party's longstanding opposition to interference with the rights of pensioners. The Conservatives, in general, have stated that they were opposed to taking action which would in any way limit the pensions of those who are in receipt of them. I wonder if the Hon. Member could explain something on behalf of the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton, who has been extremely noisy concerning this matter. Some kind soul referred to him as the Houdini of the Conservative Party. I wonder if he could explain why, when Bill C-124 was before the House in August, on August 3, and it was pointed out to them that the legislation would include pensionable income and would adversely affect the pensions of the employees of the Government, in the face of a motion put by this Party to exclude pensions from the six and five program, the Conservative Party joined with the Liberal Party to defeat our motion? Is it possible to explain why the Conservative Members joined with the Liberals on that particular action, to defeat our motion to protect the pensions of civil service pensioners?

• (1540)

Mr. Nickerson: The preamble was so long that I hardly got the question, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Nickerson: I must admit I am not fully familiar with the technicalities the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) is placing before me today.

An Hon. Member: Neither is the Member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Nickerson: I would be very pleased to review the debates and those things that the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain mentioned. I would have to admit that there were certain things in Bill C-124 that go against the grain when you have to vote on it. That happens with practically every Bill of any length that is placed before this House. There is a Bill about three inches thick and one can maybe agree wholeheartedly with two and one half inches of it, and perhaps one can live with another quarter of an inch, but perhaps dislike very