

The cumulative effect is if a member retires and starts collecting this money and is relying on those people now in the House to make that payment, which I might add is what is destroying the Canada pension plan, then the problem is that that first member who retires is still collecting while the second member retires and joins him at the trough. This is the problem with the type of system we have now.

The hon. member suggested that this is part of the remuneration package. It is an unreasonable, unrealistic way of trying to compensate people for coming to the House of Commons. A realistic way would be if a member simply got a responsible proper amount in terms of annual compensation. The difference between that and what we are getting right now is the fact that no matter what you pay a person, it stops when that person stops making his contribution. If it becomes a matter of a difference in salary or a matter of a shared contribution to an RRSP, the government's obligation ends when that person ceases to be a member of Parliament but the member then benefits from whatever resources were built up during that period of time.

I heard about double dipping from the same member. There are two things I would like to say with regard to double dipping. I am glad to see they are talking about the concept of looking at double dipping for those people who come here, leave, collect a gold-plated pension, and then get appointed to a government board. He referred to three people on this side of the House who in his opinion are double dipping. I am not one to hide behind anything. I believe I am one of those people he referred to.

• (1125)

In looking at double dipping let us first look at the type of concept by which he suggests I am double dipping and the actual benefit that I receive.

First, I am getting a pension as a result of having worked as an air traffic controller for twenty-two and a half years. In addition to the normal amount that people pay for their superannuation contribution, I paid an additional 2 per cent of my gross salary for what is referred to as an early retirement benefit. That is something that I paid over and above the normal superannuation deductions for the benefit of being able to retire early from a profession in which very, very few ever make it to full retirement.

In addition to that 2 per cent I paid, I took a reduction of 20 per cent of my calculated pension because I retired early, over and above the extra 2 per cent that I paid. I have paid well and good for the benefits that I receive.

Let us look at those benefits. I worked 22.5 years as an air traffic controller. After 22.5 years I have a pension of approximately \$17,000 a year.

Supply

As did other members, I replaced a member in order to come to this House. The member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke that I replaced after two terms of office collects a pension of \$27,000 a year, 70 per cent more than I get for 22.5 years of service as an air traffic controller. I think the hon. member might take this into consideration both in terms of pointing the finger over here at people like myself with regard to double dipping and, second, in regard to trying to defend the justification and reasonableness of a pension plan that pays someone after two terms of office \$27,000 when someone who worked 22.5 years paying 9.5 per cent of their salary receives \$17,000. There is something far apart.

Everyone who works in this House, except for MPs, the clerks at the table, the Sergeant-at-Arms, all the people who work in the House who make the machinery work, who work behind the scenes, what do they have? They pay 7.5 per cent, two thirds of what an MP pays. What benefit do they get for that? They get 2 per cent per year based on their best six year average. What does an MP get? He gets 5 per cent. If we were trying to do it in proportion it would reduce the MP's pay to 3 per cent. They cannot retire until they are 55 years of age. They cannot get any pension whatsoever if they retire before age 50. If they retire after age 50 they lose 5 per cent of their calculated pension for each year they are short of age 55.

When you start drawing the comparison to what everybody associated with the government, every single person with the exception of the MPs and of course those in the other place gets, the pension they get is wholly out of line. It is out of line with industry and it is out of line with every other single person in government.

I would suggest that the government look very closely at changing the whole concept of the program of pensions for MPs. It has to change it to a system that is based on the benefit due a person for the work they do while they are here that allows them to put away for their retirement. God knows, the way the government is going there will not be any other kind of pension available through the government.

We are telling people that they are going to have to reduce and we have to start doing it ourselves. Adjust it so that whatever payment MPs receive from the pension plan stops when those MPs stop serving the Canadian public. They will then make do with the resources they have developed as a result of putting money aside, as most people in the public have to do.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the difficulty the Liberals are having with this whole concept is the fact that at this moment our nation is under a tremendous amount of stress in terms of how we are going to fund the social programs, how we are going to be able to fund health care and how we are going to be able to fund the entitlements that people in Canada have become used to.