

Oral Questions

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would be well advised to refrain from making accusations in this House. She is saying that these communities are selling their support and she is condemning them for doing so. This is shameful.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

During this time of government downsizing we have heard a lot of talk about fairness and equity. However today we read in the papers about an example that does not seem too fair at all. It is a special retirement allowance for deputy ministers. On top of the regular public service pension, deputy ministers get an extra 2 per cent per year without paying a cent of their own. That could be an extra \$30,000 a year for life.

Why do the government and the minister hand out golden treasure to the top executives but give a lump of coal to the rest of the public service?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is certainly no lump of coal to the rest of the public service. We treat them fairly and equitably. We will certainly be doing that in the downsizing exercise.

The program was brought in by the previous government in 1988 because at the time it wanted to attract more people from the private sector to become deputy ministers. The private sector said: "You are not competitive in terms of your salaries". It said: "We will take the additional pension allowance as being part of a total compensation package and will help attract people from the private sector into deputy minister positions". That is the reason the government brought in the program.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it does sound strangely like MP pension plans.

The government actually on that one refused to take its nose out of the trough. Now on the deputy minister level we find that there is also a two-tier system depending on which level of the public service one belongs to.

For the sake of morale in the public service and for the sake of the fairness and equity the government claims, it should cancel the program that gives extra benefits to top executives and make it the same for all public servants as it should be.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of representatives of the private sector advised the government of the day on this matter. They said: "If you really want to attract top people to serve the public of Canada you are going to have to be competitive, and your salaries are not competitive".

● (1435)

We have to look at it from a total compensation package point of view. On that basis that is why it has been offered to senior deputy ministers.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In its budget, the government announces a substantial cut in international development assistance, in particular food aid to the poorest countries on earth. In fact, it is reducing by 16 per cent the multilateral and bilateral food aid budget, which will fall from \$300 million to \$250 million this year.

How does the Minister of Foreign Affairs reconcile Canada's substantial cuts to its international assistance budget with the support it gave to increasing development aid to the poorest countries at the Copenhagen summit on social development?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is about the same as that asked by one of his colleagues yesterday. In response to that question, I said that the Government of Canada had two ways of providing food aid: through its multilateral programs and through its bilateral programs.

The figures quoted by the hon. member refer to only one form of food aid. He does not have the total picture on government spending in this regard. If he combines expenditures in both bilateral and multilateral programs, he will see that our contribution remains the same.

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how does the minister justify such a substantial reduction in its direct assistance to the poorest countries even before completing the reform of CIDA recommended by the Auditor General of Canada?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to come and read carefully two questions that were prepared by his research office. He does not have to listen to my reply, but I must remind him that he should read it; he would then have the answer to his second question.