

[Translation]

Mr. René Cousineau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I cannot say that I am particularly happy about speaking to Bill C-133, a very controversial piece of legislation which has raised considerable debate on both sides of the House and, I may add, has perhaps been misunderstood by the Canadian people. This Bill modifies the Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act. Since the Bill passed second reading, my office has been deluged by telephone calls and mail. There is a great deal of discontent, not only among pensioners but also among public servants and their families. There is also a lot of dissatisfaction among Hon. Members on both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker, and I must say that I personally am not terribly happy about this legislation. However, the fact remains that life is not always a matter of doing what one wants to do but what one feels one must do. Before making a decision, a Member of Parliament, whether he is on the opposition side or the government side, and whatever his party affiliation, must always weigh the pros and cons of the legislation or program under consideration. Will it be detrimental or beneficial to his constituents? Will it be beneficial to all his constituents? Will it be beneficial or detrimental to Canadians?

The role a Member has to play is basically threefold: First of all: A Member represents his constituents and must always keep their welfare in mind, whether they are employed or unemployed, young or not so young, retired or still working. Second: Parliament is Canada's legislative assembly, and a Member must also bear in mind the interests of Canadians living beyond the boundaries of his constituency. And last, Mr. Speaker, but not least, a Member belongs to a political party, to a team. Of course, some members of the team will differ in their views, but I respect the opinions of others just as I expect them to respect mine.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in team spirit. All my life I have belonged to some kind of team, in sports or as a member of service clubs. I also feel that loyalty to one's leader, one's colleagues and to fellow members is very important, and that is all part and parcel of my list, Mr. Speaker.

In the richest countries in the world, the great industrial democracies, 30 million people are out of work, and in Canada, 1,500,000 are unemployed. It is a national and international tragedy, and we are living in difficult times, Mr. Speaker. Here in Canada, we did not want to live with the status quo. Something had to give, and hard times demand decisions. This Government has acted responsibly by making a decision in the best interests of the Canadian people, and taking specific action to enforce that decision. We must not forget that. The government made this decision on June 28, 1982, when the then Minister of Finance asked for a two-year national effort in order to bring this country out of a recession situation with 12 per cent inflation and put it on the road to economic

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recovery by bringing inflation down to 6 per cent. The main objectives were to reduce inflation and interest rates, to increase investment and to create jobs.

● (1230)

For the first time since 1977, the rate of increase in the price of food in Canada is down below 10 per cent. Statistics made public on December 31, 1982, show that food prices have gone up 7.7 per cent in 1982, which is an indication that we are doing well in this fight against inflation.

Interest rates in early 1982 stood at anywhere between 18 and 24 per cent. Last week, on January 19, they were down to 12 per cent. There again we are doing well, but nobody is rushing to congratulate the Government. People did severely criticize the Government when interest rates were very high, but now that these rates have come down significantly, it seems that the Government had nothing to do with that.

With respect to increasing investments, I would suggest there is a psychological barrier. No one seems willing to take a chance, yet that is the key to success in any endeavour. Mr. Speaker, we must have confidence in ourselves, in our neighbours and in the potential of our country. Bill C-124 was the starting signal in our fight against the recession, against inflation, and against unemployment. That was the legislation on compensation restraint in the public sector, including Crown corporations. This Bill does provide for an increase, not a decrease: 6 per cent more on January 1, 1983 and 5 per cent more on January 1, 1984. When times get hard a responsible government has to take harsh decisions which are likely to alienate the public, but we are convinced that Canadians prefer and will always prefer any policy to the lack of policy which is the hallmark of Members of the Official Opposition.

It has been stated that half a million people will be affected by Bill C-124. Capping the increase at 6 per cent will enable us to recoup \$250 million, not to mention another \$550 million in 1984 to create jobs. We are asking public servants to tighten their belts a little in the next two years to help needy Canadians and others who are anxious to work. But we need money to do that and it has to come from somewhere: either we increase the deficit or we raise taxes. The Government has chosen to cap indexation and set a ceiling on public sector salaries to give an example to the private sector, keeping in mind the fact that we must reduce inflation and be more competitive on international markets. I have already pointed out that either the deficit or the taxes would have to be increased but whose taxes Mr. Speaker? In the city of Gatineau in my own constituency, the world wide recession resulted in the loss of over six weeks of work at the CIP company which has 1425 employees. Newspaper production was reduced during that six week period. On December 7, the Maclaren company announced that its plant would close down for 12 days with 300 to 350 employees being temporarily laid off. The Thurso Pulp and