

*Oral Questions*

When I see good members of Parliament like her downgrading her own value by telling people she is overpaid, I must tell her she is not overpaid. None of us is overpaid. Concerning those who are overpaid, the people of Canada will do the right thing and kick them out in the next election.

I find it ridiculous for the Reform Party to think that members of Parliament, who make half the salary of the lowest paid hockey players in the NHL, are overpaid.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about pensions here, not pay. It is hardly any surprise to the Prime Minister that I have been talking about MP pensions. I have spoken about this for six years.

The ratio is that for every dollar I and other members in the House contribute the government is putting in six to seven dollars. That is the problem people have. We are locked into this pension plan.

I want to opt out, the voters in Beaver River want me to opt out and the Canadian taxpayers probably want all of us to opt out or at least make it fair. It is up to the government to find a way. Like the songwriter, I am saying please release me, let me go.

Why will the government not go beyond what the President of the Treasury Board said and make more than cosmetic changes, real changes to the MP pension plan?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member does not want a pension, she wants a pay increase. The commission said that at this time perhaps the ideal situation would be to give a better salary to MPs and reduce their pensions. However, at this time the salaries of bureaucrats and all other government employees in Canada have been frozen.

Members of Parliament and the public service have had no increase for the last three and a half years. Perhaps in the package they were overpaid in terms of pension but they are certainly underpaid in terms of salary. The balance is pretty good for those who are very good members of Parliament. In my judgment there are very few members on my side who are not earning every cent they are paid.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has said it cannot let all MPs opt out because it needs to protect the stability of the pension plan.

The only things the government is trying to protect are the lavish payouts to the Liberal frontbenchers, of whom there are many. Perhaps their noses are firmly planted in the trough. Pay and pension are different things. Let us bring them into line.

Will the government let the Deputy Prime Minister, the immigration minister, the fisheries minister, the finance minister and even the Prime Minister opt out of this lavish pension plan when they have six or more years of service, yes or no?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have served here for many years. The pension that will be paid to me is something I have earned serving the people of Canada.

In many ridings I see directors of hospitals and chiefs of police and dozens of other people being paid out of public money making more than members of Parliament. I am not ashamed to face the people in my riding and tell them what I earn and what members of the House earn.

Some people want to score cheap political points because they cannot get the support of the people on the real problems of the nation.

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[Translation]

**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. The minister claims that negotiations between Canada and the European Union are progressing at a rate that leads us to conclude that an agreement is imminent. However, we are witnessing a hardening of the position of spokespersons for the European Union, especially Mrs. Bonino, European commissioner for fisheries.

Could the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans report on the progress of negotiations under way in Brussels, and does he still maintain that Canada and the European Union are on the verge of reaching an agreement?

[English]

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

There are ongoing negotiations at this moment in Brussels between the Canadian and EU delegation. The negotiations have made very good progress over the weekend. Only a few matters remain to be resolved in principle.

The member will realize that at the end of the negotiating process the report of the negotiators will be sent to the authorities in Brussels at the EU government and to the Prime Minister and members of the cabinet for consideration. We hope that occurs shortly. We hope that at the end of the day, as we have always preferred, a negotiated and effective enforcement and conservation regime is possible.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, considering the items still outstanding, how does the minister