

Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act (No. 2)

Member and his colleagues, on behalf of whom he was speaking, recognize the validity of our case. Otherwise, why would they have presented that amendment to cap indexing for one year? If what we are doing is wrong, it is just as wrong for one year as it is for two years. In moving that amendment, the Hon. Member and his colleagues recognize that what we are doing is right for one year and right for two years, as part of a basic program of economic stabilization to get our costs under control, to bring down inflation, and to help strengthen the basis for economic recovery in the interests of superannuates and all Canadians.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize my willingness to review and consider carefully all of the suggestions for changes in Public Service pension arrangements which have been put forward thus far, and to discuss them with my Cabinet colleagues.

This Bill is part of a broad temporary program of economic recovery, which includes the restraint measures of which Bill C-133 is one. This Bill deals, as I have said before, only with the limitation of that portion of the indexing of Public Service pensions which is paid for out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, that portion paid for by the taxpayers of Canada generally, with the resulting funds being available for reallocation to job-creation programs for the benefit of all Canadians.

• (1120)

I therefore urge this House to support this Bill and the six and five program as part of an effort to rebuild the Canadian economy, to protect the purchasing power of superannuates and all Canadian retirees, and to provide a basis for maintaining and creating jobs for all Canadian workers.

I ask this House, Mr. Speaker, to support third reading of this Bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. I see the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) rising to put a question to the Hon. Minister. According to the provisional orders under which the House is presently operating, it is the Chair's understanding—and we have taken this matter under deliberation with the Table Officers just recently—that there is no provision for the putting of questions to the Minister and the Member immediately speaking after him. It is the Chair's understanding that the question period would be reserved for Hon. Members who have a right to 20-minute speeches. That is, Members other than the first and second speaker on a motion on third reading.

I see that there are Hon. Members who served on the Committee here present in the House. If this is not the correct interpretation of the intention of the Committee, it would perhaps be useful to clarify the matter further before we proceed. Otherwise, if the House accepts the interpretation of the Chair, I would then proceed to recognize the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker).

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I think I should make myself clear. Naturally, we are completely opposed to this Bill. If there was any place that any Member thinks I would rather be in my own constituency today rather than debating this Bill, I wish my Hon. friend would suggest it.

This has been a long and bitter fight. It has been a fight that will not be forgotten by public servants, or by others far beyond the Public Service. I have a file of letters in my office which is as thick as the Minister's head from people from all walks of life, in all parts of the country, who have shared a great concern about what has been proposed.

I know that if you went to the serving Public Service and the retired public servants, those from all walks of life, all activities within the federal jurisdiction, they would say this: "Surely it would have been the decent thing to have at least consulted us before you moved in this way".

The Minister has admitted that there was a consultation process of some kind which took place before Bill C-12. In a letter I received from my colleague, the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro), dealing with the surgical and medical insurance plan of the Public Service, he talked about the increases and the National Joint Council. He said the National Joint Council is a consultative body created in 1944 to promote regular consultation between the Government and bargaining agents. The NJC consulted on matters in respect of which it is desirable to have the same policy throughout the Public Service. If it was desirable to consult with respect to medical plans, is it not equally fair to say that it would have been more desirable to consult with respect to pensions for persons who are unprotected?

• (1125)

The utter hypocrisy of the position of the Government was demonstrated when the Minister said today; "We did not consult about this but we will consult future changes in the plan". Humbug, I say. The Government moved unilaterally without consultation. If there is to be an opportunity for consultation, then something has to happen.

This Bill ought not to be taken to its final decision today, even with closure or allocation of time, or cutting off debate, or whatever label the Government wants to put on it. It should not be taken to its final decision today. But that is the position we are in—unless something is done.

There are two things that could be done, Mr. Speaker. I do not expect that the Government would look kindly on any Liberal backbencher rising in opposition to third reading and I appreciate that. It makes me appreciate even more the courage of the four Liberal Members who have indicated that they intend to do that. Perhaps there will be some abstentions as well.

The other aspect is that if there are some who believe that there should be a period of consultation, then we should give time to the Government for this. I say to my friends that that would not be a matter of confidence in the Government; the Government would not fall if it were given that opportunity.

I wish to present a motion, Mr. Speaker, and I will present it now because an affirmative vote would allow time for consultation to take place, as it did before Bill C-12 which the Minister now says he was committed to—after he has put the