

Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act (No. 2)

expected to deliver. The President of the Treasury Board now has the audacity to stand in this House and say it was not a contract. He did not tell the House that an advisory committee had been set up which was supposed to be available to advise on pension changes and so on. Neither the President of the Treasury Board nor the Government had the decency even to talk to the advisory committee to find out their thoughts with regard to changes they were contemplating.

Mr. Gray: I certainly did meet them.

Mr. Parker: The Minister says he certainly did. Representatives of various groups came before us. I specifically asked whether they were a part of that advisory committee. They said they were and that they had had no consultation. Therefore, I can only say to the President of the Treasury Board that from the information we have from Committee, that is not so.

● (1220)

It was very interesting at the report stage to hear the Conservatives complaining about the Government breaking contracts. I could not believe what I was hearing when they talked about the importance of contracts and the need to keep those contracts. It was the Conservatives who set the precedent by breaking contracts. Do they really believe the Government would have broken this contract so easily if the Conservatives had not gotten away with breaking contracts with their own people? Where were the Conservatives when the clerks had their contract broken after they had been driven to go on strike for the first time in their history? They were right there, lined up behind the Government saying, "Yes, sir, right on".

The Leader of the Conservative Party (Mr. Clark) said the Government had not gone far enough with Bill C-124. That was the only complaint. I wonder if the Government has gone far enough now to make the Conservatives happy? Are the Conservatives happy now that the Government is not only rolling back the wages of workers but is stealing their savings? Pensions, after all, are nothing more than savings. They are deferred wages. Instead of receiving the money now, workers agree to have it put away for their retirement. They might just as easily take the money and use it to buy Canada Savings Bonds. With this legislation, the Government is stealing their savings. It is the same as retroactive wage controls. It is saying, "We are going to cut your salary yesterday so you cannot save much money". There is no difference between this and having the Government confiscate savings bonds which someone has put away for his retirement.

The Government is arguing that it is not the same, that the program is being paid for out of taxes. From presentations in Committee, I do not believe that. I believe that is a phony, trumped up excuse the Government trotted out to help sell this program. That will not wash. If the Bill is just an anti-inflation program, then the Government will have to admit that it is stealing money from pensioners and breaking contracts. If it is a program to correct deficits in the pension plan, why did they not go to the unions and representatives to discuss it? The reason is that there is nothing wrong with the pension plan and under an expert challenge before unbiased judges, there is no way the Government could prove there is.

Beyond the fact that the Bill is immoral, it is an action which would not even be legal if it were taken by the private sector. The CLC told the Committee that the Canadian Superintendent of Insurance will normally reject amendments to private pension plans which reduce benefits earned prior to the date of amendment. This Bill would not even be accepted by the standards which judge private pension plans.

This Government has made a lot of promises over the years. The Prime Minister told the Pension Conference in 1981 that it had to protect pensioners against inflation, that without this protection their incomes would dwindle. Last year the President of Treasury Board said his Government was dedicated to maintaining indexing of Public Service pensions. That was less than a year ago. In 1977, the Prime Minister said in a letter to Public Service unions that pensioners were not the cause of inflation and Government had a duty to protect them. The Government lied in each of these statements. It lied in the same way it did in 1974 when it ran an election campaign against wage controls.

Like all schoolyard bullies, our Prime Minister is afraid of the truth, and the Conservatives are just as bad for helping the Government get away with this. Why did the Conservatives not speak out when the Government began to break contracts? Why did they not even bother to show up for the Committee which was discussing this Bill? The Conservatives were entitled to have seven Members on that Committee but many times there were as few as two present.

Why did the Conservative House Leader promise to help the Government pass this Bill on November 16? It is a matter of record in *Hansard* that the Conservative House Leader in this House stated that if the Government brought the Bill forward, they would see it was speedily dealt with. Both Liberals and Conservatives have a lot to answer for in this contemptible legislation and, Gallup polls or not, we will make sure that people remember this in the next election.

I feel it is a sad day for this House, Mr. Speaker, that we have to deal with this kind of legislation and take up the time of this House to deprive Public Service pensioners, retirees, families with small children, many of them having unemployment problems as well, and Old Age Security recipients. We should instead be dealing with the major problem in Canada, which is unemployment. We are not going to create one job with the kind of program which the President of the Treasury Board is talking about in this legislation; make no mistake about that.

With respect to the railways, Mr. Ian Sinclair of Canadian Pacific was used as our chief spokesman on the six and five program, and the day after the Government adopted the recommendations of that group which expounded on this six and five track the Government got on, that group announced lay-offs right across Canada. After literally saving hundreds of millions of dollars in wages which they should be paying out, they announced lay-offs across Canada. It has in fact created more lay-offs than employment.