

Government Orders

elected members would have a choice to opt out of the plan to allow all MPs to withdraw from participation in the plan. Third, Motion No. 4 would ensure that all members of the plan are Canadian citizens. Fourth, Motion No. 34 is based on the private member's bill of the hon. member for Yellowhead, which would make provisions to recover former senators and MPs pensions on the same basis as other income received by a former member, if that former member was in that year entitled to receive old age security.

• (1030)

These 35 motions are important for Parliament and for the Canadian taxpayer. Unhappily, it appears that presentation of these motions is a futile parliamentary exercise as it becomes increasingly evident that the government has made up its mind and will move ahead with the legislation as it stands.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been listening with interest to my friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I believe him to be a man of integrity. I do not think he meant to say it but he did say it quite directly. He questioned the honesty of the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Under the rules, you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, it is not permitted to cast aspersions on the integrity of an individual. I would ask that you ask him to withdraw that aspersion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): In listening to the member's intervention I suppose what I should do and will do is review the blues for verification of the wording and possibly the spirit of what was said.

I take the member's point of order with great seriousness and, if necessary, I will report back to the House.

Mr. Frazer: Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation to withdraw the comments the member for Burin—St. George's referred to. They were uttered inadvertently. I did not intend to cast aspersions on the parliamentary secretary's integrity or his honesty.

The House has heard many arguments as to why the proposed revisions to the MP pension plan are still too generous. Committee members have received repeated testimony from highly qualified witnesses who confirm that the plan is still far too rich and is basically poor public policy.

Let me quote Paul McCrossan, a former member of Parliament and now an actuary for Eckler Partners Ltd., who appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. He said:

My conclusion is that the bill is bad for you as members, bad for Parliament as an institution and bad for Canada because, having acted on this bill, you will hamstring this Parliament in dealing effectively with the most urgent challenges it faces, namely redesigning Canada's national retirement income and medical

care systems to reflect the financial realities of Canada as well as Canada's rapidly aging population.

This is exactly what is now happening. Parliament is hamstrung from dealing with important issues of the day: our increasing deficit and debt, social program reform and building a stronger economy which will produce more jobs for Canadians, to name just a few key problems.

Despite the apparent futility of our efforts, Reform members cannot, with good conscience, allow the legislation to slip by without resistance. Perhaps those large pink pigs placed on the front lawn of Parliament to protest this pension scheme last week say it best. Surely there is no other place in this great nation where people are authorized to legislate the amount of their own benefits and salaries.

I would agree with those who contend that the basic pay of members of Parliament is insufficient when the responsibility and workload are considered. However, this pension benefit cannot be justified and continues to leave a foul taste in the mouths of all taxpayers.

Is our government blind to what is right? Why, rather than paying lip service, has it not undertaken realistic pension reform? Certainly there have been enough good suggestions given both in the House and in representations to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The Reform member for Beaver River will refuse her million dollar payout and, under the deliberately planned punitive opting out provisions, will lose any government contributions made to that plan.

Members will know that normal pension plans see the employer matching employee contributions. Even with the revisions to the pension plan instituted by the government, the taxpayer will be contributing an excessive \$3.60 for every dollar members of Parliament contribute.

• (1035)

The government made the opting out provision punitive because it very much wanted the member for Beaver River to opt into the plan so that during the next election it could point the finger at members of Reform Party and say that we were no different from the others.

But we are different. We fought for these very principles during the last election. The parliamentary secretary's reference to the fact that it is Reformers who are bringing these measures to Parliament is absolutely wrong. Yes, we are transmitting it, but we are bringing the message from all Canadian taxpayers.

Unhappily, despite the wishes of the parliamentary secretary, it would appear that the same issue will be around again in the next election.