

Why not look at equity at the same time? The members of both Houses of Parliament are paid the same: \$64,000 per year. However, there is a discrepancy between the House of Commons and the Senate. I just gave you the contribution and accrual rates. Why not have parity in that respect as well? Why should MPs be entitled to full pension after 19 years and senators after 25? Why not agree on 20, 10 or 25 for everyone?

Minister Eggleton was in a hurry. He was in a hurry because, as he said, we are under pressure. If you are going to do something —

[English]

• (1440)

— why botch the operation? Why not take the necessary time and do a good job?

Although the National Citizens Coalition is not my favourite organization, their recommendation to look at the total MP compensation package — salary, benefits, and tax-free allowance, to which my colleague Senator Corbin alluded earlier — makes sense to me and to many other Canadians.

The previous government, and the government previous to that, the Trudeau government, said that senators only exist to finalize their work and live according to the Constitution. They believe that they can send us bills as late in June as they wish, and we will rubber stamp them according to their wishes.

The Trudeau, Mulroney and now Chrétien governments do not bother with senators unless it is time for us to pass their bills. They do not consider our problems or the inequities of the system, whether those problems involve tax free allowances, salaries or other matters.

Certainly, we need to control our deficit, but there are better ways to do that than those shown by this government in Bill C-85. With this bill, the government has botched the operation. The minister tried to justify the early passage of this bill because people were concerned about this issue, and it was controversial. The pensions of members of Parliament have been controversial for a long time, and they will continue to be as long as the government continues to shirk its responsibility to do things properly.

I invite colleagues on both sides of the house to vote against this bill, as I will. Rather, let us do the job properly and have a complete, detailed and serious study of this issue.

Hon. Eymard G. Corbin: Honourable senators, Bill C-85 deals with pensions for members of the House of Commons and the Senate. It also lays down rules, chapter and verse, for former members of either house with respect to double dipping.

The government of the day is using double standards, as have previous governments, with regard to public policy. It says, with the approval of both Houses of Parliament, that former members who take other employment for which they are remunerated more than \$5,000 will not have access to their pension benefits from the members of Parliament pension account.

We are set up on a pedestal, illustrating the morality and the righteousness of this policy. We are supposed to applaud ourselves for voluntarily committing our principles toward that noble aim.

However, governments never apply that policy to their employees. There is a basic unfairness with respect to the way the government deals with taxpayers' money. Of course, our pensions are, in part, paid from the general revenue of Canada; from tax money. However, that is the case as well with the pensions of the RCMP, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and other civil servants of all shapes and colours who can move from job to appointment to job under the umbrella of the federal government, without ever having to forgo a pension earned in a previous occupation in the government. That is what I call a basic unfairness.

We are set up as models of what fiscal responsibility is all about, but it does not go beyond the Senate and the House of Commons. No consideration is given to future impacts or effects, many of them negative, that this could have on former members of the Senate or the House of Commons. We are not all in the same fortunate position when we leave this place or, indeed, when we come to it. I am one of the rare senators who can say that I have no other source of income but what I earn here.

Senator Prud'homme: Me, too.

Senator Corbin: That is fine. Let us all get up and join in the chorus. I welcome you.

[Translation]

Senator Hébert: I am poorer than you are, Senator Corbin.

Senator Corbin: It may be so. Poverty knows no limit.

You distracted me for a moment, but what I mean is that members and senators are being used —

[English]

— former members of the House of Commons and former senators. I realize that with regard to senators, it rarely happens, but in terms of the House of Commons it does happen currently.

The thrust of my intervention today is that that sort of policy consideration is never applied to civil servants, and especially top civil servants, the highest paid in the country. They can retire and serve under contract with the government thereafter, and continue to benefit from income from the government. They can retire from the Armed Forces and work in another department of government while continuing to receive their pensions.

In fact, someone comes to mind right now who is well known to all honourable senators. After serving Canada overseas, he got another job in Canada and, subsequently, a third job in Canada. All three jobs were with the government. He is now collecting three pensions. Over and above that, since his retirement from his last job, he does contract work with the government while collecting all three pensions. Where is the basic, primitive, elementary justice in that kind of policy?