

*Supply*

With those comments, I am pleased to have participated in the debate. Again, I want to thank the Prime Minister for following through with his election promises to amend and reform MP pension plans.

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, this member, when our member for North Vancouver was making some comments a couple of weeks ago, said that it was the gong show, that he could ring the gong.

I can imagine that there are a number of Canadians who are watching the parliamentary channel today who just listened to this wonderful verbose bunch of hot air and they want a gong. How in the world can this member say that there should be some reasonable expectation on the part of members of Parliament with respect to this particular issue when we have all known that this has been a major issue? How does that compare with the people of Canada who have lost their jobs, who are having roll backs in their pay cheques and who are facing hardship, for members of this assembly to be sitting around saying: "Well, you know, I really wasn't expecting this. Boy, I don't know"?

I have a lot of sympathy, and I mean this in all seriousness, for the former members in terms of the reform of the pension plan as was suggested by the member for Vancouver Quadra in the same way that I have sympathy for Bobby Orr and other people who are members of the NHL Players Association when they apparently were ripped off in that situation.

What about the old age security recipients?

• (1515)

What about the people who put away their dollars in good faith that the Liberals were going to bring in some kind of a sound policy over the last 25 years so that their retirement pension plans would not have been eaten up by inflation and so that their entire pension plans would not have been under attack by the policies of this government?

Those being my comments I ask the member: Considering that this issue is the number one issue on the hit parade of all Canadians, the number one reason why Canadians do not feel comfortable with politicians, why they think that we consider ourselves to be in a different class or a different league, which I do not and I do not imagine any other member does, why does he think his Prime Minister has delayed and delayed and delayed to bring forward this very simply reform?

**Mr. Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, in reply to the member's points, first, he commented with regard to the aspect of reasonable expectation on behalf of those who seek elected office.

When I sought elected office I knew very well that the Prime Minister or the then leader of the Liberal Party had made a commitment if elected to reform MP pensions. I was expecting that and I fully took that into consideration. The reasonable

expectation that I am talking about has to do with the constant suggestion on behalf of the Reform members that all members of Parliament should now take salary cuts, we should just not have a pension plan, and so on.

I must say that if this House and the Canadian people want to attract good people to this Chamber to make sure that the views of Canadians and the laws of our country are good laws, we are going to have to make sure that there is a fair and reasonable compensation. That is all I ask, that there is a reasonable expectation that it will be fair and reasonable and not somehow adjusted in major way after the fact.

That is why I raise the point that perhaps changes should be proposed before an election to be in effect after an election so that absolutely everyone knows what the story is going to be during their term.

Finally, with regard to the member's comments about old age security, I think it is patently unfair to somehow start raising that there are other social programs. We are talking about members' pensions. The motion says that it should be the same as pensions that exist in the "norms for private sector pensions".

I wonder if the Reform Party really means that. One aspect is that in normal private sector pensions, as a charter accountant I know there are portability provisions whereby the accrued benefits that one had during the period that one was there one gets to take them and transfer them into another plan. As the member well knows that is not the case with the current plan for MP pensions.

I would just say that there are some differences. Whatever it is, whatever it turns out to be, I am very confident that it will be fair and equitable to members of Parliament and to all Canadians.

**Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address this notion held by some that pensions are not required around here.

**Mr. Abbott:** We have never said that.

**Mr. Harvard:** I have heard it said.

**Mr. Abbott:** Not today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I would just like to remind colleagues so that we can all have the benefit of the debate to please direct their interventions through the Chair.

**Mr. Harvard:** They are very sensitive, Mr. Speaker.

In any event, I think most people would agree, even Reformers, that in this place, the House of Commons, membership should be open to all Canadians. Membership here should not rely on personal wealth. That being the case I think it is incumbent upon us to pursue policies to ensure that not only rich people are able to come to this House as members of Parliament.