

*Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act (No. 2)*

shown even the slightest sympathy for these pensioners, and in view of the correspondence I have received, especially during the holidays, and also considering the commitment made by the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) a few years ago, I believe it is my duty to take the strongest possible stand against the proposal now before the House.

Mr. Speaker, people say that we supported the principle of 6 and 5 policy, and they would also have the public believe that the Progressive Conservative Party has changed its mind. We were aware of the difficult situation they had put the Government in, and we are also aware of the economic disaster for which the Government must take the responsibility. Some time ago, the Prime Minister of Canada made an appeal to the nation, to all organizations and even to the Members of the Opposition, asking them to help him get Canada out of the present recession for which he himself, I feel, is partially responsible. We did want to try once more, and we shall probably regret it, to trust the Prime Minister, and considering our responsibilities as Members of this House, we had a duty to help Canadians get out of this recession as painlessly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, to get back to the information and complaints I received from a number of public servants who live in Quebec, this morning, in the few minutes at my disposal, I want to let those 20,000 retired public servants in Quebec know, and on their behalf I want to say that our party will do everything it can to obstruct this bill, which we feel is entirely unfair and certainly does not live up to the very important promise made by the Prime Minister of Canada in 1968, when he told us that he was going to create a Just Society in this country. I also know that there are now 86,000 federal employees living in Quebec and an additional 45,000 who work for Crown corporations.

I feel that as the only Quebec Member of the Opposition in the House, I have a duty, on behalf of those thousands of Quebecers, to at least ask my Quebec colleagues to show the sympathy and compassion they have been unwilling to show until now.

Furthermore, I think it is very important that the people of Quebec should know about the commitment made by the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) a few years ago to provide for and support a pension plan that would provide a decent living. In this connection, I would like to recall, as did one of my colleagues here in the House, a letter written by the Prime Minister of Canada to Mr. Power, letting him know what the Prime Minister of Canada's views were on the subject of pensioners. In our society, he said, pensions provide a means of sharing risk so that we can retire in reasonable security and dignity, without fear of the future. Protecting pensions from inflation by indexing them to increases in the cost of living should be an integral part of our pension schemes. Indexing, he said, does not give pensioners an increasingly larger claim on our economy's production, that is, more money to buy things

they could not earlier afford. Rather, indexing merely enables pensioners to maintain, roughly, their same standard of living. Even a modest rate of inflation destroys, at a devastating rate, the buying power of people on fixed incomes. Pensioners are out of the work force and cannot bargain or strike for larger incomes. Indexing does not give pensioners an increasingly larger claim on our economy's production. Rather, indexing merely enables pensioners to maintain, roughly, their same standard of living. Pensioners are out of the work force and cannot bargain or strike for larger incomes. They are not the cause of inflation; they are its victim. We have an obligation to help protect them.

That, Mr. Speaker, was what the Prime Minister of Canada said, probably as part of that solemn promise he had made to create a Just Society. Today, the House is considering legislation that goes directly against the principles we have supported and intend to support once more. I think that in any case it is our duty, as Members of this House, to recall the commitment made by the Prime Minister of Canada, and if the attitude taken by the Government today cannot be called a fundamental betrayal of the Prime Minister's commitment, then I wonder what it can be called, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Prime Minister is away on a trip at the present time, and he must be very glad not to have to face the speeches being made here in the House of Commons, and if we were obliged to vote before the Prime Minister gets back, he would probably be equally delighted not to have to betray his own commitment to these pensioners.

**Mr. Gauthier:** He came back yesterday!

**Mr. La Salle:** He came back yesterday. In the circumstances, he will have an opportunity to vote and explain how he can betray his commitment to these pensioners. Mr. Speaker, that is why I am launching a special appeal to the Members from Quebec, on behalf of 130,000 public servants, either retired or still working in the public service and living in Quebec. I believe it is my duty to remind those members from my own province that, at the very least, they must support the commitment made by the Prime Minister of Canada. It is not the first time that the Prime Minister ignores his commitments, but I do not want to go into that. I shall have other opportunities to show that the Prime Minister has not always kept his promises. How can we possibly hesitate and not be totally honest towards these people who deserve all our respect and who have helped us build our society? It is solely on behalf of these thousands of people that I rise today in this House, Mr. Speaker, to ask my colleagues from Quebec to show first some honesty concerning the commitment made by the Prime Minister of Canada and then a minimum of sympathy for the needs of pensioners in view of the present economic conditions, and at the same time, of course, to keep the promises made by the government to public servants.