

Private Members' Business

In this regard I am putting the bill forward in a serious manner. I hope that members of the Reform Party and the Liberal Party will join with me in supporting the bill.

• (1745)

There are a few more things I would like to add with respect to some of the impacts on the bill but I note that the Liberal member opposite is anxious to say a few words on it.

There have been some comments in the House today concerning the MPs pension plan. There are members of Parliament who will argue that members should not receive any pension whatsoever. For those who argue for no pensions, one has to question their motives. Is it because they already have a pension, or is it because they are representing interests which will pay them handsomely for doing other things? Or is it simply an attempt to falsely bribe the electorate into believing that if the MPs are not worthy of pensions or MPs should not take pensions they might be more worthy of support by the electorate?

I think those arguments are false. People will support honest, hardworking politicians who are fair, who work to build our country and who raise taxpayers' money fairly and spend it even more fairly and wisely in a very accountable fashion. People will agree that if we are not doing a good job or if we are corrupt or dishonest, we deserve nothing. In fact, nothing is still too much for some in people's minds because of the lack of work they have done or the corruption they have been involved with.

No one disagrees with that but it does not mean because there are some bad apples in a profession that all are bad, or in the case of members of Parliament that none deserve or are entitled to pensions. I do not subscribe to that.

I believe if taxpayers treat their members of Parliament satisfactorily in terms of pay and benefits, be they current or deferred or both, that the members of Parliament will be responsible and accountable to those who pay their salaries and benefits. If members of Parliament or any other elected official are not paid satisfactorily, they will receive income from other sources. Perhaps they will be accountable to those other sources more so than those people they are representing in this wonderful institution called the House of Commons.

I do not take for one second the argument that members of Parliament should not take a pension if they deserve it, if they have earned it and if they have served their country well. There is some room to manoeuvre in terms of the possibility of not having served the country in an honourable or honest fashion. Then perhaps some penalties might arise. However, I certainly believe Canadians would agree that if a member has worked and earned his or her pension then the member is entitled to it.

There will always be a debate on how much the pension should be, but the point is that the concept of a pension is realistic. If a member of Parliament receives a pension, the member will work hard in this House of Commons to ensure that all Canadians receive a fair pension.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden as he introduced this private member's bill. While he may have had some very virtuous points, I think his bill is misguided.

It is unfortunate that this bill cannot come to a vote because then we could make a decision on it. However, it is not a votable item so we will have to make do and it will be dropped from the Order Paper after the debate. That is not going to stop me from expressing my views about the hon. member's bill, of which I am sure the hon. member for Mackenzie was a reluctant second-er.

Having said that, it is important to look at what the hon. member has proposed in reality. While it may have a superficial appeal in terms of actual fairness, I suggest it is not exactly what Canadians would want.

Canadians earn pensions in the course of their employment as part of the remuneration for the employment they are engaged in. In other words, if I take a job and am paid a specific salary, attached to the job will be the possibility of a pension.

• (1750)

Let us assume that the job is one that has a pension attached. My salary will be lower than it might otherwise be in order for the employer and I to contribute to a pension plan. We will contribute at varying rates according to the terms of the contract but nevertheless, contributions will be made to a pension plan.

It will be understood that that is deferred compensation. It is money that I am not being paid in the course of my employment to ensure that I receive additional moneys later. I make that agreement when I make a deal with an employer. The hon. member knows that all kinds of persons engaged in employment contracts make those kinds of deals.

He is now saying that where a person is subsequently elected to the House of Commons, at the time that he is entitled to draw a pension from another source, that pension should not be paid to him or her. Or, if it is paid, his or her salary as a member of Parliament is reduced by the dollar amount of the pension.

Let us imagine for a moment that in my previous employment I had been engaged in a place where I earned a pension. I was not, but suppose I was. Suppose that on my election to the House because I had left my previous employment I was eligible to a pension of \$30,000 a year. That would mean my sessional