

Supply

years old, which means that when you are 46 or 47, you will get a pension for life, and we pay for it. Nice work if you can get it!

Fortunately, I had the right answer, because I kept telling them: No sir, I do not intend to sit for more than one term in the Parliament of Canada, because I hope I will not have to come back, once we have settled the constitutional issue. I must say I found this answer very convenient.

In concluding, I would like to try to modulate the hon. member's views, and I would ask him whether he does not think it would be advisable for the government to table its bill in the near future, because it has already finished its first year. People who would like to get into politics during the next election, in about three or four years, should have a good idea of what they are getting into, and as well, it may be easier to deal with these issues at the beginning of a government's term.

You have had time to consult the way you consult on all kinds of things. We have probably had enough consultations. So, is the government going to make a decision very shortly so that during its first term, it will have responded to the wishes of all voters who want to ensure that their members are well paid but not excessively so? Their working conditions should make it attractive for talented people to run for Parliament, but at the same time, fairness should be a major consideration within the Canadian system as a whole.

• (1655)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I would ask the member for Trinity—Spadina for a short reply.

Mr. Ianno: Mr. Speaker, first it is our intention to introduce what our commitment was in the red book, as we have done with many of the commitments we have stated in the red book and have fulfilled.

There is a slight concern now. That is we want Canadians to get back to work. That is much more important than worrying in three or four years time about who is thinking about running for this Parliament. Our ultimate responsibility is to make sure that Canadians participate in the economic viability of this nation.

Working with small businesses and many of the issues we are dealing with to try to get the economy back in gear is very much more important than this aspect the member addresses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake—Endangered species.

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on the motion before us. This is an important issue that, as has been pointed out, was

dealt with in the red book. This appears to be a controversial issue. Much has been written in the papers and shown on television. The issue raises a question: Are the current pension provisions for members of Parliament appropriate?

The motion proposes to replace the existing pension plan with a pension plan that reflects the commitments made in the red book. It is an issue this government wants resolved. This government plans to keep its promises. The Prime Minister has given a clear indication that we will deal with this issue. The details still have to be worked out.

Today I want to place the issue in context. One of the measures by which we can judge whether the current provisions are appropriate is to look at what other governments are doing around the world. In its report on parliamentarians' compensation, Sobeco, Ernst and Young compared our overall compensation with that of parliamentarians in other countries. These countries were Australia, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Sweden, France and the United States.

As members recall, Sobeco based its studies on our indemnities, allowances, services and benefits as well as those of senators. The firm looked at compensation practices and policies, trying to determine similarities and differences in approach from other countries. Then it estimated the value of total compensation for parliamentarians in each nation. While the roles of parliamentarians differ somewhat in the various countries studied, that does not take away from the validity of the comparisons in the consulting study.

Looking first at total compensation the consultants included base salary, the annual value of the pension plan and private insurance. The results show that Canadian MPs rank in the mid-range of the seven countries studied. The best paid by far are American members who receive more than double what Canadian, Australian and French parliamentarians get.

Australia, Canada and France are closely bunched together and they are significantly ahead of the United Kingdom, Belgium and Sweden. Taking sessional indemnity, our basic salary, we are in much the same position internationally. American legislators are way ahead of us. Their salaries are estimated at over \$169,000, while ours are \$64,400. The Australians and the French get slightly more and the rest lag a bit behind.

In terms of pensions alone, we rank somewhat behind both Belgium and Australia and ahead of the remaining countries examined. The pension rules vary from country to country. Parliamentarians are entitled to a pension as soon as they are elected in Belgium, France and Britain, while they must serve at least five years in the United States, six years in Canada and Sweden and eight years in Australia. In other countries the pensionable age ranges from a low of 12 years service in Sweden and Australia.