

Supply

who retire of their own free will or who are forced to retire because voters have decided it is time for them to do so.

• (1245)

Because of their precarious position, members of Parliament must be given sufficient financial resources to get back on their feet after retirement or electoral defeat. There is however one thing on which the Official Opposition has always been clear, that is, when a member of the House of Commons has the right to collect a pension from the Government of Canada. We do not find it normal for a person who is barely 30 but who has completed two mandates to be able to collect a pension from the Canadian government immediately.

In our opinion, we should discuss the age at which former members of the House of Commons should be able to collect this pension, by comparing apples with apples. Let us look at how things are done at the RCMP and in the Canadian Forces. This could help us in trying to determine the age at which former members of the House of Commons should be able to collect their pensions.

Of course, we are also opposed to double dipping, that is, getting two cheques from the Canadian government. We think that this practice should be abolished. For someone who is already receiving a pension or an allowance because of their past services to the Canadian government to be allowed to continue to collect these cheques while sitting in the House of Commons is not normal either, in our opinion.

We do not intend to compromise on the age at which one may collect a pension or on what is commonly called double dipping.

To consider the issue of pensions, we must look at reality. Many members of this House or of previous Parliaments had a job in which they contributed to a pension fund in the company where they worked. When they came to the House of Commons, they contributed to its pension plan and stopped contributing to their other plan. Often, a member who leaves this House finds that he has contributed for a very short time to a private pension plan, so he will have to continue working for quite a while. He will be penalized because the pension fund is not transferable. We should look into this issue.

I do not think that we can solve these problems with an opposition motion. We will have to wait for a government bill to frame the issue so that we can really debate it.

We now have a five-line motion. I think that a fleshed-out bill should have quite a few more provisions and that a non-partisan review should lead to the government presenting a bill, as the Prime Minister said a few days ago.

• (1250)

Finally, we said that we could consider the government bill very calmly, but surely not in the heat of a debate that stirs passionate feelings against members of Parliament, in which people are led to believe that MPs are literally sucking the teat of state. The whole benefit package of members of the House of Commons, particularly their pension plan, must be the subject of a government bill that is considered as neutrally and objectively as possible, certainly not in the heat of passion and especially not one from people who told us at the beginning of the session that they would cut back their salary, or at least part of it, that they would give back 10 per cent of it and then said that they had made a mistake. "I have unemployed people at home and I cannot afford to set aside 10 per cent." Such an issue so easily inflames public opinion that perhaps we should avoid doing it.

For the reasons which I mentioned, the Official Opposition will vote against the motion before us today.

[*English*]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today's motion by the Reform Party is premature. The government is committed to honouring the red book commitments with respect to ending double dipping and with respect to dealing with the question of minimum age. Reform of the pensions is clearly a matter of interest.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Langlois: Point of order, Madam Speaker. I would like to know if the hon. member is speaking in the period for questions and comments or if he is opening the debate on the issue.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ur): The hon. minister is on debate.

Mr. Eggleton: Madam Speaker, the government is committed to the reforms that were outlined in the red book with respect to pensions.

The member for Beaver River, a member of the Reform Party, the third party, is very premature and is wasting her time in presenting today's motion. It has been clearly said previously by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and myself that a presentation will be made to the House before the end of this year with respect to the government's plans regarding the matter of pensions.

One of the hon. member's colleagues mentioned that the Prime Minister had said in the days when he was in opposition that he could bring in the pension reforms in one day. He did not necessarily say it was going to be day one and it does not need to be day one of this Parliament. It does not need to be done with the kind of urgency the hon. member for Beaver River suggests it should be.