

itself. In the event you do not know it, Mr. Speaker, this report is extremely complex, with many ramifications, implications, and complications. Half of the report, in about 154 pages, is an analysis, and we have at least 75 pages of charts, tables and schedules. On behalf of my party on this side of the House I might say that it would be quite difficult in three hours to analyse material which the minister has had for three months. I am not making light of this; I am not trying to be too severe, but I want the minister to know that because this is an important document we cannot have it for three hours and reach a conclusion as to the several analyses, charts, graphs, and schedules related thereto. I say we are now faced with a debate that will continue within the public sector and private sector relating to pensions.

I refer to the minister's statement regarding an important matter found on page 5. He says that "the union representation in these sessions made it quite clear to me that they would not be prepared to endorse it in its entirety, the package I have just announced." I will not dwell on this too long. I wonder what kind of consultations we have with the bargaining agents for the public service. It is my understanding and, of course, the minister will correct me eventually so I do not want to take too much time on it, that there was very little. If there was it was not too meaningful.

I believe the minister has an escape clause in the end. I refer again to the speech on page 6 where it says that the bill itself will spell out all of the day-to-day details on how these principles and policies will operate in individual and special situations and ensure that the changeover to the new rules will be carried out in a smooth and equitable manner. That is extremely important. The minister has indicated without any hesitation that he is in favour of indexing pensions; that they should be actuarially sound, and they should not be paid for out of the public purse.

This is our policy, sir. There is no question about it. I hear the good doctor on the other side saying "hmm". I am trying to be as responsible as I can. This is extremely important. We listened to the minister without any catcalls because we realize that it is a very sensitive subject. I do not want any undue intervention from members on the other side who have not read the minister's statement or who have not read the press release and have no idea as to what is contained in the Tomenson-Alexander report.

Without getting waylaid with inconsequential facts, let me say that this is an important statement which the minister has made. As I said, it is an approach which does endorse indexation even though the minister likes to play games with words and leaves them out at times, but then he brings them back again. This is a form of indexing, Mr. Speaker. All he has stated now is that we cannot afford the type of indexing we have had in the past because it is mortgaging our future. Therefore, we have to have another look. We will have indexing but it has to be actuarially sound. This is what my leader has been stating over the past few months.

The minister's statement raises many questions as to what is happening around here respecting old age security. In terms of the guaranteed income—I see the minister is shaking his head

Pensions

but I just want to put it on the record—it will raise questions by those not affected by this bill but who are curious. It is my humble submission that you cannot trust this government. And I did not say the minister. I have shadowed him for a number of years and I have to watch him very carefully. He is slick and slippery, but basically he tries to be honest.

I want to put in a plea for the old age security recipients, the recipients of guaranteed income supplements, of veterans pension, and of CPP. This legislation does not affect those things, and I see the minister nodding his head in the affirmative that we do not have to worry. He will stand up later on in the question period and reply to that and say "Yes, the hon. member is quite right, they do not have to worry". You remember, Mr. Speaker, when the government said they were not going to affect the old age security payments, the minister said, "We cannot afford to have the social services we have right now and we are going to take a long hard look at them". I may be paraphrasing. But just as long as the minister lets me know now that today he is not playing around with our senior citizens, those who, because of the ineptness and mismanagement of the economy, cannot afford to exist. He gives me that assurance, but I want to make sure that this is a statement that can follow my remarks and others because the wage and price controls are still in my head.

I remember when the government said that wage and price controls never worked in Great Britain or the United States and that government would never bring them in. What do we have now? I do not have to tell you. I notice that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) sent a letter dated October 12, and I will not say that he deliberately misled the Canadian people because that is unparliamentary, but I will say that he was less than honest. He was talking about people and in that letter he said:

Protecting pensions from inflation by indexing them to increases in the cost of living should be an integral part of our pension schemes. . . . They are not the cause of inflation; they are its victim. We have an obligation to help protect them.

Mr. Andras: What has changed?

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the minister now says, "What has changed?" My point is that the implication was that the indexing would stay as it is. So there is a change because we are not having the same form of indexing. We have the Prime Minister's letter, however, of October 12. I believe this is the same position he put to the defence employee association, that they should have comfort in saying, "We do not have to worry because the Prime Minister is speaking."

With respect to total compensation, this seems to be a new theme. The Treasury Board, on introducing the Public Service Staff Relations Act, indicated that civil servants' benefits which include indexing add about 30 per cent to base wages. I want to emphasize that. We have to examine the impact this new scheme will have. Does this reduce the 30 per cent and, if so, by how much? The Public Service Staff Relations Act refers to an advisory committee on pay research. In other words, this whole question of total compensation, as it applies to the public service, as it relates to the private sector, is under