

The question is this: When they compare members in this House with the private sector, when they refer to the private sector in this motion, what do they mean? Do they mean seasonal workers or people in management? Do they mean professionals or individuals who unfortunately had to drop out of school very early and start work at a very young age? I want to ask the hon. member what he is comparing us with when he compares us with the private sector?

[English]

Mr. Morrison: Mr. Speaker, I will have to ask the hon. member what he means because I did not follow the gist of his question. If what he meant was do I think the same rules should apply to people in trades, people who have professions and people in business, the answer is yes. Anyone who comes here draws the same salary while here. Anyone who comes here would be in the same position to contribute to his or her own personal RRSP to the same degree. Therefore I see no relevance to what a person's background might have been.

• (1555)

Ms. Catterall: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I want to advise the House that the government speakers from now on will be dividing their time.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join this debate.

I am a new member to this House. I ran on pension reform and have worked toward pension reform since the election. Unlike the member for Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia I have worked at it since coming here. I have not waited until today to do something about it. I have been in touch with the minister. I have been in touch with my colleagues. As the member for Cumberland—Colchester said earlier this is what we should have been doing during this period of time.

This debate on MPs pensions is very important, as the Reform members say. I am pleased to join it because I am convinced that the government is committed to reform MPs pensions. I for one am determined to see that the government does.

I would like to point out to hon. members and the people following this debate that the opposition motion about replacing the existing pension plan states that we should replace the existing pension plan "with a pension plan that reflects the commitments made in the document entitled "Creating Opportunity", the Liberal plan for Canada".

That is of course the red book. I am glad the Reform Party recognizes the significant contribution the red book has made to the debate on MPs pensions, just as it has made a significant contribution to focusing debate in this Chamber for the last year since the election.

That red book with its list of commitments and with its articulation of the philosophy of this government has provided a

Supply

tremendous focus for innumerable issues including among them MPs pensions. Within that matter of MPs pensions, it has drawn attention to one thing which I noticed the members opposite are not discussing very much. It has focused public attention on the important question of double dipping.

I would like in the short time that I have available to focus on double dipping. I know that my colleagues from Halifax, Vancouver Quadra, Mississauga South and Vaudreuil have spoken on the matter of the age at which the pension should be received. I am very interested in and would like to talk particularly about double dipping.

Double dipping means simultaneously drawing a pension as a former member of Parliament and a salary from the federal government. It is a practice that has obviously and I would say rightly angered many Canadians. I know it has angered many people in my riding of Peterborough.

Let me remind hon. members of the wording of the red book statement on double dipping. We said: "A Liberal government will reform the pension plan of members of Parliament ending double dipping. MPs should not be able to leave office and receive a pension from the federal government if they accept a new full time paying job with the federal government". I suggest nothing could be clearer than that. This is the commitment that has been repeated by this government since the last election. We will end double dipping.

Some of the members opposite have been talking about timing. I myself have argued from this side that we should have moved earlier on this matter and on the age of receipt of pensions. There has been pressure on this House to do with the economy, to do with stimulating the economy, to do with creating jobs. In that pressure it seems that this matter has been left but I personally hope it is dealt with very soon. I am sure it is going to be dealt with.

• (1600)

Before we go any further, we have heard some of this from the other side, let me say that I do not want to here cast dispersions on former members of Parliament who were entitled under the existing act to receive both pension and another federal salary.

There are many MPs who have served this country well and who are continuing to do good work in other federal positions. Clearly it is time for the rules under which those honest members of Parliament work to be changed.

Mr. Speaker, you may wonder why this situation cropped up in the first place. In the mid-1970s pensions were being viewed increasingly as an earned right. Some people viewed their pensions as deferred compensation. In their view reducing or suspending pensions on gaining another job was similar to retroactively cutting a pensioner's salary.

In 1975 the government of the day decided that the fairest approach would be to allow federal pensioners to draw a pension