

*Oral Questions*

stuffing mattresses. They do not say anything about double dipping, even though a few of them understand it quite well.

The cuts we announced in the budget of 19 per cent over the next three years are very substantial cuts. In one year, we cut the MP contribution by 33 per cent. On top of that, salaries of members of Parliament have been frozen for six years. Therefore the compensation package overall for members of Parliament has been going down.

It has been going down to help meet our deficit reduction targets, to help get our fiscal house in order.

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, for the information of the President of Treasury Board, we would support any legislation he introduces to eliminate double dipping.

On Monday, the Prime Minister said he cannot reform the MP pension plan retroactively because "there is a rule in democracy that we do not pass retroactive legislation".

Considering the fact that the Liberals applied retroactive legislation to the Pearson contract, public service contracts, the EH-101 contract, the Canadian taxpayers working overseas, can the minister explain why the Liberal fat pack is not subject to the same rules as those Canadians?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has been said many times in the House why the Pearson deal and others were changed. It was a bad deal for taxpayers.

What is a good deal and a show of leadership is when the members of the House cut their compensation packages. That is what has happened in the case of MPs' pensions.

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[Translation]

### CONTENTS OF THE BUDGET

**Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a government member admitted that members of the Liberal caucus were informed of the contents of the federal budget a week before it was tabled in the House on Monday, which gave them a chance to prepare for cuts that would affect their ridings.

Would the Acting Prime Minister confirm what was said by the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington, in other words, that budget secrecy was violated by her colleagues in the Liberal caucus.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** Order. I must ask the hon. member to rephrase his question so that it concerns more directly the area for which the minister is responsible and not what another member may or may not have said.

**Mr. Lefebvre:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask whether the Minister of Finance briefed the Liberal caucus before the budget was tabled?

[English]

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the comments of the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington were taken out of context.

She was referring to the fact that we have had the most open budget making process in Canadian history. The Minister of Finance should be congratulated for consulting widely, not just with his parliamentary colleagues but with industry and all Canadians.

She was referring to the fact it was well known because my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs had talked about the downsizing of the public service. It was in the public domain. It was not a leak of the budget.

I should tell members that all of us in the ministry were only informed of the budget's contents shortly before the minister presented it to the House.

[Translation]

**Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why only Liberal members had this opportunity?

• (1145)

[English]

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member listened to the answer.

I have been around for budgets before in other governments. The fact is that the Minister of Finance followed the true parliamentary tradition in terms of developing the budget in secrecy but did consult widely with all Canadians.

In no way did the comments of the hon. member on this side of the House conflict with what the Minister of Finance brought forward last week.

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### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence announced an eventual 20 per cent cut to his general staff by 1998. This is too little too late. Canada will still have a ratio of generals to troops double that of Germany or the United States.

Can the minister justify the fact that even his target reductions leave his ratios out of whack?

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very