

Compensation

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave)—Agriculture—Request that beef import quotas will not be increased; the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Parker)—Employment—Clarification of provisions of Outreach program.

It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, notices of motions and public bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

ADVISABILITY OF LIMITING COMPENSATION PAYABLE TO CERTAIN CATEGORIES

Mr. James Gillies (Don Valley) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of introducing legislation to limit the total compensation payable to (a) a public servant (b) an officer or employee of a Crown corporation (c) an officer or employee of an agency coming under the jurisdiction of the government, to an amount no greater than the maximum salary and allowance paid to the elected representative who receives the highest salary and allowance under the terms of the Senate and House of Commons Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I hope this motion will be supported by a number of members of the House for a number of reasons.

First, I have said many times in the House that because we operate under the British parliamentary system we have not built into our legislative processes any system of checks and balances. Moreover, because of the changes that have taken place in the rules of the House over the course of the last decade, members of parliament have been unable to hold up supply to the government, one of the fundamental privileges of any opposition. Consequently one of the fundamental ways in which a government should be held accountable for what it does is non-existent in our parliament.

● (1702)

I have also often made the point in the House, as have many of my colleagues, that in the examination of estimates before the committees of this House we are not able, for a variety of reasons, to do an adequate job of finding out where the taxpayers' money is spent. Consequently, it is important that we begin to build into our system some checks and balances to take the place of those checks and balances we no longer have.

[Mr. Peters.]

This proposal today introduces one check, albeit a rather modest one in terms of the total number of dollars involved. However, it is symbolically an important check on the way the taxpayers' money should be spent.

If we legislate that no employee of the Government of Canada, or of a Crown corporation or agency of the government, can receive compensation greater than the highest compensation paid to an elected official of this country, namely that of the Prime Minister, we have set a standard for salary determinations which I think is important. Can one argue affirmatively that any member of the public service or of an agency of the government should be paid more than the Prime Minister of Canada?

My second reason for introducing this motion is that we have had great difficulty over the years establishing appropriate compensation for senior executive members of the public service. As hon. members know, a variety of committees have been set up to examine compensation for public servants and to set up adequate guidelines. However, this has always been extremely difficult to do. These committees tried to have some kind of comparability with similar salaries in the private sector, but the problem is that the jobs are not the same.

I have had friends point out to me that a person who fulfills the responsibility of deputy minister has only half the job of a senior vice-president or senior executive officer in the private sector. In the private sector, the man with that responsibility has to raise the money he spends as well as oversee the way in which it is spent. The deputy minister, on the other hand, does not have the problem of raising the money; he only has the problem of spending it.

I am not suggesting a deputy minister might not have other duties that a man in the private sector does not have. The reality is that it is difficult to make comparable decisions as to how these positions should be compared.

The third reason for bringing forth this suggestion is that we are in a period of restraint. Anyone who has been in this House of Commons for a number of years knows that politicians do not raise their compensation without considerable debate. They do not do so without assessing whether the people of Canada really believe members should be paid more for the services they provide to their constituents and the people in general. There is always heated discussion when the question of payment of members of parliament comes forward. That is not the case with the establishment of compensation for executives on the administrative side of government. There is no public debate on the question of compensation for a very large number of government, agency and Crown corporation employees.

In the last ten years, as the figures show, the increase in the number of appointments of people filling executive level jobs has been larger than in any single area of employment in the federal government in relative terms, and the public knows little about the salaries of these employees.

The fourth reason for supporting this motion is that it would bring public accountability to the establishment of salaries in