

THE SENATE

Thursday, February 25, 1954

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

Routine proceedings.

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

REPORT OF CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to present a report of the Civil Service Commission of Canada respecting a revision in salary ranges for certain members of the staff of the Library of Parliament.

The report was read by the Clerk Assistant.

Hon. Mr. Beaubien: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate I would move—

Hon. John T. Haig: Honourable senators, it was only within the last fifteen minutes that the contents of this report were made known to me, so I have had no time to study it at all. I suggest, therefore, that the report be allowed to stand over till the next sitting of the house.

Hon. W. Ross Macdonald: Honourable senators, before this report is allowed to stand, I would like to explain that adoption of this report will give to the staff of the parliamentary library the same percentage of increase in salaries as was given to other civil servants earlier in the year. As honourable senators realize, we are now near the end of the month of February and salary cheques for the last two weeks of February will be issued to civil servants on Friday or Saturday. After today this house will not be meeting again until next week—that is, at the beginning of March—and if the increases are not authorized before then they could not be included in salary cheques until the middle of March. If this report recommended for employees of the library salary increases different from those given to other civil servants, we might be justified in holding it over. But, as I say, it does nothing of the kind.

Hon. Mr. Haig: Honourable senators, my position is simply this. I have never heard this matter discussed, aye or no, in any way at all. True, we have had increases in our indemnities, but that matter had been discussed up and down in the other house for days on end, and when it came to this house

I understood the problem involved. I do not know the problem involved in the matter before us now. As Leader of the Opposition I have a duty to perform. I may be the leader of only five or six members, but my duty is to see that no legislation is put through here hastily unless I fully understand it. I cannot be overridden on this point, for a motion to adopt the report at this sitting requires unanimous consent. Surely if any member of the opposition does not know what is in a report it is his duty to the people of Canada, in general, and to this house, in particular, to urge that the report be allowed to stand over, to give him an opportunity to study it. I know that certain increases were given to civil servants in December and I agreed with them.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: At that time these particular civil servants were left out.

Hon. Mr. Haig: And no doubt I shall agree with the proposed increases for these employees. They are not going to lose any money through our letting this report stand over. They will get their regular salary cheques at the end of this month, but the increase will come later. I do not believe that the civil servants involved are in such a position that it will do them any particular harm if they do not get the increase until the middle of March.

I repeat that it is my duty to insist that the house shall have a proper chance to understand this report before it goes through. I do not object to the fact that, on many issues, the majority override me. But I must make a stand when I think my duty is clear, although I would like to oblige the leader of the government.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: It is not to oblige me, it is to oblige civil servants.

Hon. Mr. Haig: I know. I have a great respect for the Civil Service, but I have a greater respect for the taxpayers of Canada; and I say again that we must know what it is intended to do before it is done. So I must refuse my consent. Otherwise I would not be discharging my duty.

Hon. Mr. Reid: If I may be allowed one word, I would say that I look at this matter from a different point of view. According to my information, some ordinary messengers around this building are getting more pay than men with technical experience and ability employed in the library.

Hon. Norman P. Lambert: I think that, on general principles, the position taken by the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) is sound. But in the particular instance before us, if any fault at all attaches