

Salaries Act

the emoluments of cabinet ministers, and that therefore they were going to bring it before parliament in a clear-cut form. Though I might disagree with that, I certainly would respect them for doing it in this way. But I am afraid I do not feel a great deal of respect for the manner in which it has been done across the years.

The other course the government might follow would be to say that they were going to put through this bill providing for an increase of \$5,000 in salaries to cabinet ministers despite the opposition of some hon. members but since they were going to do that at this time they were also going to abolish the \$2,000 and be satisfied with a net increase of \$3,000 in the salaries, or a total net increase of \$7,000 instead of a total of \$9,000.

As I pointed out earlier, on previous occasions when I dealt with this matter, I have dealt with it only from a procedural aspect. I have not suggested in the past that the motor car allowance should be cancelled, but for my part, I do now make that suggestion. I suggest that if the government insists on going through with this increase of \$5,000 in salaries over and above the \$4,000 increase in indemnities, that this is a time when they could well afford to take up the slack so far as this \$2,000 motor car allowance is concerned and deduct it from the emoluments of cabinet ministers.

It may be, Mr. Speaker, that I have broken my own pledge not to get too legalistic about this question, but I did feel that this was a time when something should be done about the matter. I honestly thought it would be dealt with on this occasion because of the statements the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) has made in the past. He has implemented his assurance with respect to the salary of the secretary to the Governor General. I am sorry it has not been done with respect to the motor car allowance, and even yet I think something should be done about it.

For that reason, together with the reasons stated earlier by my leader for being opposed to this increase along with the other increase, I shall vote against the second reading of the bill.

Mr. R. R. Knight (Saskatoon): Mr. Speaker, the scope of argument in this discussion is very limited, and without indulging in repetition one can hardly find anything to say. I want to register my opposition to the bill. My personal feeling, and it is a strange one, is that we are in a situation of unreality and fantasy. I do not think that the term "fantastic" is too strong a one to use respecting the amount of the increases sought in this bill. I do not want to make an emotional

[Mr. Knowles.]

appeal, but when I say "fantastic", when I say "unrealistic", I think of the condition of the people of this country, 50 per cent of whom earn an income of less than \$2,000 a year. Those are the people who send us to parliament, who sent me to parliament. I think too of what we might do for old age pensioners. I am well aware that the total amount involved in this legislation would not improve the condition of these people appreciably in the matter of cash, but I am dealing for the moment with ideas and principles.

I think of the increasing unemployment, for no matter what may be the correctness of the figures submitted on both sides of the house, there is no doubt that unemployment, seasonal it may be, is certainly increasing at the moment. One could mention the means test, veterans allowances, blind pensions and all the rest. That is why I say that I feel we are in a situation of fantasy and unreality. Therefore I am opposed to the principle of the bill. I opposed by voice and vote the bill which increased our own indemnity. The supporters and sponsors of that measure could at least advance the argument that its provisions were based upon some proof of need.

It is on the question of need that I am going to base my objection to these increases. I am not convinced that that argument can be applied to this bill. Up to the present time I have heard nothing in the debate which would prove to me that the beneficiaries of this legislation need such increases. Through the other bill cabinet ministers have already received an increase in their indemnities from \$4,000 to \$8,000, although I grant that the actual increase is only \$2,000 in view of the fact that the increased indemnity will be paid on an annual rather than a sessional basis. Nevertheless there has been an increase and it applies to cabinet ministers as it does to members of parliament. I would be quite content to let it go at that.

To my mind \$27,000 is a lot of money, however capable those who receive it may be. I should like to point out that after all cabinet ministers are made and not born. They enter the cabinet by virtue of the fact that they first of all have been elected by the people. When they come to the house they come, like the rest of us, with the idea that they will perform the functions and receive the indemnity of a member of parliament. In his wisdom and good time the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) calls upon them to be members of the government, and I would ask hon. members if it is reasonable to think that their need immediately increases at that moment from \$17,000 to \$27,000 which it is proposed to give them under the bill.