

SALARY DEDUCTION ACT

PROPOSED CONTINUATION OF DEDUCTION OF TEN PER CENT FROM INDEMNITIES AND SALARIES

The house resumed, from Tuesday, February 7, consideration in committee of the following proposed resolution—Mr. Rhodes—Mr. LaVergne in the chair:

That it is expedient to continue in force the provisions of the Salary Deduction Act 1932, until the 31st day of March, 1934, and to provide that the provisions of the said act shall apply to the indemnities of members of the Senate and House of Commons for the session of parliament which commenced on the 6th day of October, 1932.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I had not intended to say anything further on this resolution; I rather meant to say what I have to say when the bill comes up for second reading. The reason I speak now is that I want to refer to matters to which the Minister of Finance alluded to when the resolution was before the house over two weeks ago. In the first place, at page 1892 of Hansard, he is reported to have said:

There was no undertaking with respect to what might or might not have to be done in the future.

May I refer to what took place last year when the Prime Minister is reported in the Evening Citizen of February 26, as having said:

We must economize wherever we can and in seeking to save \$8,000,000 in civil service salaries we seek the loyal, even the enthusiastic support of the civil servants with the government of your country and mine. We ask the sacrifice of one year's self-denial on your part not as civil servants but as fellow citizens who have with us a like responsibility to our country.

That applied not only to civil servants but to all of those who come within the four corners of the bill. I find lower down in the report the Prime Minister said:

That task requires every ounce of energy we all have and we think if we look to 60,000 of our fellow citizens to sacrifice for one year for Canada we feel we are not asking too much.

Then lower down, under heavy captions:

Help For A Year

We are asking those with a secure tenure of office to help us for a year, since the bill calls for a reduction in the fiscal year ending March 31, 1933, and we believe we are not unreasonable.

May I turn to Hansard of last year at page 812 where the Minister of Finance is reported as having said:

But what we are doing is this. We are asking that, while the country is in dire need—

Then I interrupted, saying:

You are not asking.

Then the minister continued:

—of a contribution from all its citizens, the civil service shall make a fair contribution for one year only. The bill will provide that it shall apply for one year only, and at the end of that year the salaries of civil servants will be precisely what they were but for the intervention of the bill.

As I said a moment ago, that applied not only to civil servants but to all of those who come within the four corners of the bill. There was an undertaking, a promise, that that would be for one year only. Nothing was said at the time as to what would happen if conditions were what they were last year or worse, but there was a solemn undertaking and promise that all of those who were mulcted to the extent of ten per cent last year would not have the same thing done to them this year. When I have finished the observations I wish to make at this time, I should like the Minister of Finance to answer this question: Will he make the same promise this year? Will he undertake in the same terms as he did last year, that this will be for only one year or for what period will it be? I fear much that as long as this administration is continued in office, every year they will trot down that old dead horse of the previous year, the old dead statute which was resuscitated the former year and which will be resuscitated next year and have the same force and effect again.

I want to refer to page 1876 of Hansard of this year. I do not know particularly why the Minister of Finance should have gone out of his way to say what he said, summing up conditions in Ottawa:

I know of no city in Canada where there is less distress and want than is to be found in this very city.

I am not here to make public to Canada the state of distress that exists in Ottawa and it would have been better had the minister, with his usual courtesy, not mentioned conditions at all. It seems to me that there is some reason, some motive in putting forward this idea, so that the city may be hit hard. There is in Ottawa suffering just as keen and deep as in any other Canadian city, but if those actual sufferings and miseries are not as obvious as they are in other cities, the credit is due to the city council, the welfare bureau, social organizations and other charitable institutions here which, without ostentation or glory to themselves, are doing so nobly and well the work for which they were constituted. Let me, however, tell the Minister of Finance that one-sixth of the population of this capital city, right within the shadow of the Peace tower, is or relief.