

Senate and House of Commons Act

[English]

On a rainy day, in troubled times, the following lines might be consoling to some hon. members:

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

Longfellow wrote those words in his poem "The Rainy Day".

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT****AMENDMENTS RESPECTING MEMBERS' SESSIONAL AND EXPENSE ALLOWANCES, ETC.**

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen that Bill C-242, to amend the Senate and House of Commons Act, the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, and an act to make provisions for the retirement of members of the Senate, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization.

Mr. Korchinski: Mr. Speaker, just before private members' hour I was attempting to point out that each constituency is different and that each member must therefore see things from a different point of view. I attempted to indicate that in many urban areas a great many people such as bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, and so on, earn more than the salary of a Member of Parliament. I represent a riding which is faced with a different situation: the average salary in my riding is much less.

There are many Indians resident in my riding, and I do not have to tell anybody what their average salary is. I represent a riding in which the miners are involved in a strike. Hon. members will appreciate the effects a strike situation has on a community which is almost solely dependent upon the payroll of one industry. For a consecutive number of years there have been crop failures in my area. This has caused a great deal of difficulty because the area is dependent upon the sale of grain. These are the types of people I deal with and live among.

To these people a large increase in the salary of a body of legislators is difficult to explain. Very few people really know the problems of others, but the salary an MP receives is public knowledge. People often get the impression that an MP is able to save his salary. Many have the impression that we still have the first nickel we were paid; they feel they have expenses, but we do not.

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard).]

This situation remains difficult because the government has not devised a formula of increasing the salaries and allowances of Members of Parliament. Within one, two, three, four or five years, this or another Parliament will again be faced with a similar problem. The public seems to accept the fact that civil servants deserve increases. I think there is a time and place for this. In any event, I have to explain to my constituents an increase such as is proposed in this bill.

Perhaps to some extent this increase is justified. Like everyone else, my banker and I know what the situation is. I think a partial increase on the basis of a formula would have been far more acceptable. Even if I were to go along with the proposed increase—and there may be some justification for it—it is difficult to explain. In my federal riding there are no less than eight provincial constituencies. Each member of the Saskatchewan legislature receives \$9,000, and the legislature may sit for only six or eight weeks per year. During the remainder of the year these representatives can be gainfully employed at their own occupations. In addition, these representatives are within easy reach of all parts of their constituencies: perhaps within an hour's drive they can visit all the areas they represent. They do not have to maintain a second residence because they are away from home only three or four days each week and can climb on a bus in Regina and travel home each weekend. When I compare this situation with my own, I wonder why I should apologize for any action of this type which the federal government sees fit to take.

Many of the Members from Saskatchewan represent northern ridings and have to fly into these areas in order to keep in touch with their constituents. In order to do so, one is lucky to get by on less than 50 cents per air mile. Hon. members can imagine how quickly this expense will grow. On such a trip a member might visit 50 communities where he sees some very shy children and a few squaws who have not accompanied their husbands to their jobs in the bush or on the fishing lakes, whatever the local employment might be.

● (8:10 p.m.)

You find out how fruitless and wasteful the expenditure of money can be in such areas, as well as how politically ungainful these things can be—because the money can be spent in many better ways. But, I believe these people have as much right as anybody else to be represented. When I realize that eight members of the provincial legislature take home something like \$72,000 for representing the same area which I represent federally, and realize also that I am about 2,000 miles away from home, I think of the frustrations I have in attempting to maintain a farm for the future benefit of my family and myself should I be asked to stay home.

When I think of such things I have no hesitancy in respect of this increase. Most people, however, are very reluctant to accept it because when they look at the size of someone else's farm they believe that farming operation makes money while their does not. This is an automatic point of view. When I consider that some public servants, as I understand it, have had an increase from