

ly that this was not a matter for official party caucus consideration. It was considered, but as far as caucus was concerned no decision was made. However, there was a pipeline. The hon. member from our party who was involved from time to time brought various proposals which had been made to individual members of the caucus. I understand that several varieties of proposals were made. According to the information he received, he conveyed his impressions to members on the government side as to what would be the reaction of individual members of our caucus. That is the way it developed. It probably developed that way in all parties.

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Baldwin: I am not suggesting there was an all-party committee; however, I am suggesting that a variety of proposals were brought to individual members of our party from time to time. Our reactions to those were conveyed to the other side. I must say that I do not think anyone knew, nor could they know, until this bill received first reading what the government's decision would be. That is the way this matter developed. That had to be the way. It would be improper and incorrect, in a parliamentary sense as well as politically wrong, for any other course to have been followed. Certainly, the final decision must have been the decision of the government, just as the final decision with regard to the bill must be the decision of parliament. I will come to that later, but I think that point has to be made.

When I consider the pros and cons of this issue some propositions come to mind. I did not know until a short time ago that I would be the member singled out for the honour of making this presentation. The thought occurred to me that I was probably in the position of a trial judge sitting on a criminal case without a jury. As the trial judge, I would direct the jury as to the law but the jury would be the sole judges of the facts. The trial judge who is both judge and jury has to direct himself. My approach has been to direct myself as objectively as I can to a pros and cons study of the facts.

There are one or two members of our party who feel there should be no increase at all at this time because of economic constraints, the rate of inflation, unemployment and the need to show restraint, both present and potential, with regard to government expenditures. There are one or two members of my party who feel that very strongly. Against this, I think we should point out that in the kind of world in which we live—and this is the fourth debate of this kind in which I have been involved—there has never been any time really that was right; there was always an opportunity for someone to say the time was wrong.

● (1620)

An hon. Member: The whole thing is wrong, too.

Mr. Baldwin: In the last 20 years there have been periods of unemployment, periods of inflation, periods when it was necessary for restraint to be shown; there was always an opportunity for anyone with sufficient ingenuity or sufficient lack of political morality to say the time was not appropriate for an increase. If this parliament lasts for another one hundred years or two hundred years, as well it may, no doubt this kind of statement will be made by

Members' Salaries

some people, that the time is inappropriate for members of parliament to be given an increase. I must say I do not accept that argument.

We have embraced a form of welfare state whether we wanted it or not. It slipped in by the side door and it does provide measures for easing the burdens of those who are less fortunate. Nevertheless, as in other parts of the world, it has done nothing and it will do nothing to reduce the disparities between the respective levels at which people live in a society, and human nature being what it is, I do not believe it will be easy to bring about a change in this respect.

It is true there are those in our country whose standard of living—the rate at which they are providing for themselves economically—is far below average. But this does not constitute, in my judgment, a valid argument for opposing the suggested increase in members' salaries. If it is accepted as a valid argument, it becomes a valid argument against any raise for any segment in society whether it be business, labour or government. It would apply to all segments of society. I reject that argument out of hand.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: There has been a suggestion that the timing is wrong; that an effort is being made to slip the bill through at a particular time as part of a devious move. I understood the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) to say the other day that it was not his intention to seek to speed up the passage of this measure. In any case, I gather that if he did ask for its speedy passage, consent would not be given. I understood that the bill would be processed in the normal manner and that no attempt would be made to inhibit speakers at various stages as far as the government was concerned. So I suggest there is no validity attached to that statement about timing.

The President of the Privy Council said he hopes the House will recess on December 20. I do not know what the final decision will be. It is for the government to propose a date for the recess and bring a motion before the House accordingly. But the final decision lies with hon. members themselves. I am not suggesting the House should sit beyond a particular date.

Then it has been argued that the bill should not have been extended beyond members of parliament as such; that it should not have covered members of the cabinet, the leader of the opposition or even the House leader of the official opposition. The government House leader said, quite properly—as I would have said—that the last raise for hon. members who hold certain positions took place in 1954.

In those circumstances, I do not think the two parts of the bill can be separated. If there is a good reason to raise the salaries of members of parliament, then obviously those members who have been given special responsibilities ought to be entitled to a corresponding share. I say with regard to my own particular case, as I think I must, that I held the position of Conservative House leader for some years and enjoyed it; it was a thoroughly worthwhile exercise in the workings of parliament. I stepped down voluntarily, but I have since resumed these duties on a temporary basis. So as far as I am concerned, I do not think this raise will be of much benefit to me.