

*Salaries Act*

from the Minister of Finance or from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Let me remind hon. members of the increase in corporate profits, especially in 1974. In the last few months we have heard a lot of weeping and wailing about corporate profits falling. There has been a great gnashing of teeth in this regard, but let me suggest—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order, please. I have listened very attentively to the hon. member and I am wondering whether he is still speaking on Bill C-24. Perhaps he could limit his remarks to that bill.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Madam Speaker, I am arguing that increases in incomes such as those proposed in Bill C-24, and as proposed in bills C-47 and C-44, are unjustified. The Minister of Finance and the Leader of the Opposition talked about restraint, but they did not show any restraint in respect of those bills. The Leader of the Opposition did not say a word about restraint in respect of Bill C-44. It seems to me that anything we do in the way of restraint should apply to Bill C-24, and should have applied to Bills, C-47 and C-44. It should also apply to Bill C-23 when it comes before the House. I could get up and make the same speech again on Bill C-23 if necessary, Madam Speaker.

How can members sit here and support the increases we are suggesting for lieutenant governors and what we did for judges, MPs and senators, and not do anything about the incomes of corporate executives, and corporate profits, while at the same time supporting restraint for all others? How can they do that and expect the public to believe them or have any confidence in them when they speak about restraints, particularly when they know at the outset that they are unfair. The people know that those who already have are the ones who get more and the ones who will not be affected by restraints, or at least they will be affected to a very minor extent by any government program of restraint and control. If the government does resort to mandatory controls, then those who already have been given more through bills C-44 and C-47, and will be given more by bills C-24 and C-23, will not be affected: they will already have their increases. The ones who have not received increases will be hit by these controls whether they are voluntary or mandatory.

The people on low and middle incomes are the ones who will be told not to ask for more or not to ask for too much. They are the ones who will be told to ask for just a little bit. The ones who are getting \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year, with a wife, three kids and mortgaged up to the eyeballs, will be told not to ask for more. This is intrinsically unfair, yet the Leader of the Opposition acquiesced supinely to bills C-44, C-47, and now C-24. I find this incomprehensible. I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that he read the remarks of a member of his own party, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). I will say nothing more on that subject.

To show how callous the Minister of Finance is, the only defence he made in response to criticisms about these huge increases was that the timing was lousy. If that does not reflect real disregard for the people on pensions and low and fixed incomes in this country, I do not know what does. Not only was the timing lousy; the amounts were lousy. The increases for lieutenant governors in this bill

[Mr. Benjamin.]

are being justified to us on the basis that they have not had an increase for 12 years. It is said that if you work the increases out on a percentage basis over the 12-year period, they are reasonable. One could do that with an increase in the income of John D. Rockefeller or E. P. Taylor; you could say that because they have not had an increase for 12 years, 1 per cent would be justified—but 1 per cent of tens of millions of dollars is quite an increase.

Another point that is bandied about is the percentage increase. If the increase is 12 per cent of \$35,000 or \$55,000, that is a different ball game compared to an increase of 12 per cent of \$10,000 or \$12,000. It is suggested that an increase in salary to \$35,000, \$40,000 or \$45,000 for judges is not too much because when you work it out on a percentage basis over a four or five-year period, it only comes to about 12 per cent per year and that is within the suggested restraint guidelines. They do not talk much about 12 per cent of what. It works out to an increase of \$15,000 a year. That is as much, or more, than the majority of wage earners in this country earn in a whole year. That is how much the increase is for the first year.

● (1230)

I agree with the point made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, the Leader of the Opposition and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) about the respect due to people who hold positions such as that of lieutenant governor or judge in our country. But I suggest those people are of such a calibre that they should be the first to say, if there is a sacrifice to be made, restraint to be shown and leadership to be given to all our population, they should be first in line, instead of asking the workers of Canada and pensioners to be first in line when it comes to exercising restraint. We should be saying to the corporate executives, the professionals and others that they, corporate profits and interests rates should be first in line in respect of restraint and controls. We should start at the top and work down. We should have a little more equality and decency in this society, instead of sitting here mouthing restraint and talking about fighting inflation which ends up as a fight against the poor.

We are dividing our people even more by helping those at the top and decreasing the opportunities of the low and middle income people to own decent homes. The whole attempts of the government to arrive at a program to fight inflation that would have the support and co-operation of the provinces, the municipalities and the public at large is shot full of holes by the succession of steps that have been taken in the past year. The four bills I have mentioned are just four of those steps. There is the constant rise in interest rates in respect of homes, the unconscionable program which instead of getting more houses built is getting fewer houses built, and the attack on the people who are unemployed as well as the failure to increase pensions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member again, but I am afraid he is straying from the subject matter of the bill. May I remind the hon. member that Standing Order 35 states that no member may reflect upon any vote of the House except for the purpose of moving that such vote be