

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Mills:** It is not part of the act.

**Mr. Bird:** Forget the act, we are talking about the total package. You are resting on technicalities. The facts are that the public disrespect members of this House in a total compensation context because every so often somebody, either members themselves or journalists or citizens, take one narrow aspect of our compensation program and highlight it as this motion does today. It makes it look like a very stellar and courageous performance, we are going to change the world. Well, let us really change the world of politics in this country and in this House. Let us call for a public inquiry about the total compensation package, including the pension plan. Let us receive recommendations, let us debate them in this House, let us, in full public view, initiate a brand new compensation regime that touches all of these bases and let us implement it at the time of the next election.

Let us make sure that everybody running for office knows what it is in advance. Let us not compromise anybody's pension plan to this point. They have earned them under visible circumstances. Let us go on, from the next election forward, in a total regime, salaries, expenses, air travel, tax provisions, housing and pension programs that the public has confidence in and it will attract the kinds of people we need in this House.

I would vote for that kind of a motion. I would vote for that kind of a private members' resolution that puts it all on the table and says: "Let's strike such a commission and let's do it now."

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

• (1840)

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who just spoke, spoke very well of some of the problems that attend the life of being a member of Parliament and attend the issues which this bill, in some respects, raises. I say in some respects because what is wrong with the bill is that it does attempt to deal with one particular problem in principle in isolation from the rest of the package, if you like, of issues which the hon. member who just spoke raised and that is the whole matter of compensation for members of Parliament and everything that involves.

Therefore, I would support, rather than this bill, the call by the hon. member who just spoke and the call by others over the years, that in some way or another these questions be taken out of our hands. We cannot win in terms of public opinion no matter what we do, as long as the public continue to be cynical about the political process. I might add that the public have always been to a degree cynical about politicians and the political process. In that sense we do not live in some new age.

I remember going through a book that had been prepared *Fifty Years of Headlines*. One of the headlines I noticed in the year 1906 was about MPs raising their salaries to an exorbitant rate. So as long ago as 1906 the media and, presumably others, were enjoying making members of Parliament out to look bad.

I think this has been an industry for a long time. No doubt, sometimes we have collectively deserved that criticism and other times we have not.

I was disturbed to hear the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood get up and say that we are the most distrusted people in the country. Frankly I do not feel that way. I do not feel like I am one of the most distrusted people in the country. I am still proud to be a member of Parliament. I still feel good about being a member of Parliament. If the member for Broadview—Greenwood feels like one of the most distrusted people in the country, I feel sorry for him. Sure people are critical of politicians and they are critical of the political process. But I think that is an exaggeration.

What we have here in the form of this bill and in the form of the comments made by the member for Broadview—Greenwood and other comments that have been made from time to time around this place is a form of piety, of piousness, of self-congratulatory heroism at the expense of one's colleagues.

The principle that the member opposite wants to promote, that all money should be treated the same, is a principle that I do not think anybody in my party would have any difficulty with. I think it is a principle we have promoted in the past and continue to promote.

All we are saying about this bill is that by itself it cannot deal with the over-all problem, both with respect to perception and with respect to reality as it pertains to members of Parliament compensation package.