

Senate and House of Commons Act

the last time there was a raise in indemnity it was decided that it would be big enough to last for the next several years. I say that is a lot of nonsense.

The same thing was said by that brilliant associate editor of the *Globe and Mail* in this morning's editorial, which stated that for the next 10 to 20 years Members of Parliament would not have to ask for another raise. Just imagine, Mr. Speaker, my hiring a secretary in 1963 at a salary of \$6,000 a year and telling her that since this was a very good salary she would not be able to have a raise for another 10 years! I suggest that the hon. member's argument is absolutely infantile and should not have been put forward.

There is no question that the members of this House require enough to be able to carry out their duties and to live in a decent way. If some hon. members want to live in a garret, that is their business. But my constituents would not want me to live that way, I have no intention of living that way and no Member of Parliament should be expected to live that way. Certainly there is a need, one that has been pretty well universally accepted.

When the Beaupré committee was first formed I recall that a very prominent journalist, Charles Lynch, wrote an article in very strong terms, in which he said the following:

It is my view that the increases are valid, and I would have said so had the MPs voted them through forthwith, instead of taking the more considered line of turning the matter over to the new "advisory committee on parliamentary salaries and expenses." I think they should raise the wages, and put the chop on election spending.

There is no doubt, as Stanley Knowles of the NDP said yesterday in sanctimoniously opposing pay raises, that the impartial committee will propose substantial increases, effective this year.

In the last paragraph of his article he had this to say:

The nation expects a professional job from them—

That is to say, Members of Parliament.

—and public expectations are rising. The MP, if he is to meet the increasing demands upon his time and his intellect, needs more money and more staff. Above all, he should not be prey to the pressures that burden a man who is forced to spend more than he is paid.

[*Translation*]

I represent a large constituency of northern Ontario. I have always said that it is as large as France but unfortunately someone has told me that it is not as large as France but a few square miles smaller. In any case, it is almost as large as France and certainly larger than Italy.

There is only one member of Parliament for this constituency while there are 400 deputies in France and I do not represent 50 million Frenchmen but I must serve 80,000 Canadians. I have to travel all across the constituency. My constituents are quite scattered. I know what it means to spend money on air fare and accommodations throughout my constituency. I am among those members of Parliament who find themselves short of money every month. This is why I hope this legislation will be adopted as soon as possible and I would ask my colleagues from all parties to support it.

[Mr. Stewart (Cochrane).]

[*English*]

It is never pleasant for a Member of Parliament to have to raise his own salary. This is something that seems to irk the public. They say, "There you are; you are just voting yourself a raise". It's not quite as easy as that and I think it is high time that the press, so ready to criticize us, explained this to the people. First of all, we do not just suddenly decide to vote ourselves a raise. Cabinet has first to be convinced that we need one, and they have to bring it forward. This is something the people do not understand.

Various things could be said on this subject, but it seems to me that since we have been discussing salaries for the past two years, in caucus, in committees and among ourselves, we should make this debate as short as possible instead of carrying it on. We have given our opinions from all parts of the House, representing all parts of the country. I suggest to hon. members that we should complete second reading as soon as possible so the bill can go to committee.

I do not think there is any member of the House who does not agree that something has to be done and that action is long overdue, though we cannot all agree on the action that should be taken. Many of us would like to take different action. Perhaps some prefer not to have a non-accountable allowance. But the point is that this is what has been proposed. It is a difficult situation and so far no one has been able to come up with a better solution. Perhaps they will in the future.

In the meantime, I think it behooves us all as Members of Parliament to stand behind the proposal of the government and to pass the legislation with the minimum of delay. We would then begin to serve our constituents in the manner they expect. We do not want to live in the lap of luxury, and that is not the idea. But we do want to be able to give proper service to our constituents. We do not want to have to say at weekends, "I am afraid to visit part of my riding because I simply cannot afford big hotel bill and the trip home." Although this should not happen, it has happened and it means we are being thwarted in our efforts to serve our constituents. I therefore implore all my colleagues to co-operate with the government on this measure so we can better serve our constituents.

● (9:40 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak after the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin), I fully endorse his stand on Bill C-242 concerning increased allowances for members of the House of Commons and Senators.

I was rather surprised tonight, Mr. Speaker, to hear the hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) say to the members of the Ralliement créditiste that they were against this bill. Yet, we are only using the time allotted to us. I should like to point out to the hon. member who was asking me a while ago if we meant to engage in