

salaries are provided not for the individuals who happen to be occupying seats at the moment but for the positions which are held.

Finally, I join with the Prime Minister in expressing appreciation for the work done by the Beaupré Commission, by the Clyne Committee and by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I realize that the subject of members' salaries is a delicate one and that there is a great deal of uneasiness and some tension in connection with the matter. I also recognize that since the salaries and expense allowances have not been adjusted for eight years there may be some justification for increasing them now. I am most anxious that no one in the House should interpret what I am about to say as amounting to a "holier than thou" attitude, but I cannot agree to an increase of 50 per cent in the salaries of Members of Parliament when the government and the Prices and Incomes Commission have told the workers of Canada that they cannot have increases of more than 6 per cent and when the chairman of the Prices and Incomes Commission now says they should not have increases of more than 4 per cent to 5 per cent.

● (2:40 p.m.)

It is true to say that the job of a Member of Parliament has now become a full-time job, that we are working long hours and all the rest of it. It is also true to say that the overwhelming majority of working people in this country have no alternative but to take the jobs they have, no matter how low their wages, and that Members of Parliament have an alternative as to whether they want to be here or do some job elsewhere which may pay them more. I do not think this comparison is at all justified, either morally or factually.

I appreciate that there are differences in this House, that there are some people who are better off, some people who are worse off, some people who have more dependants and some who have fewer dependants to take care of. I do not condemn anyone for supporting this proposal, but I say that increases of 50 per cent in salary and 33 per cent in our expenses are far too large to place before Parliament. This is far too large an increase for us as Members of Parliament to accept and vote for at a time when a large proportion of our working people are unemployed and at a time when we have told workers there are limits to the amount of increases for which they ought to ask.

I find particularly unsatisfactory the suggestion that these increases be retroactive for six months to last October 1. Nor can I accept the explanation that there is a make-up provision by which we average out the increase to 6 per cent per year since 1963. The railway workers were negotiating very recently and demanded a make-up provision because they had fallen behind. They got something, but very little, and we were on the verge of a strike because of the attitude taken by the railway companies, particularly the publicly-owned company

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which depends on this Parliament for additional funds to deal with increases in the wages of its workers.

An hon. Member: What about plumbers and electricians?

Mr. Lewis: An hon. member refers to plumbers and electricians. Let me say without any hesitation, speaking for myself, that I think the increases in the construction trades did not take into account the need for homes, the cost of homes and the public welfare of this country, but that does not justify Members of Parliament taking steps which are socially unjustifiable in the circumstances in which we live.

The Prime Minister says that the government took into account the Beaupré report. May I suggest that the government did not do that at all. Two of the things the Beaupré report emphasizes are that there ought not be large expense allowances without expenses being justified by voucher and, second, that there ought to be a large increase in the kind of services we are able to give our constituents and the kind of facilities we have to do our jobs. Both of these suggestions were ignored by the government. The government merely proposes to increase from \$6,000 to \$8,000 the non-taxable expense allowance, for which we are not required to provide any vouchers at all. This is a pretty large sum of money that can now be used by Members of Parliament and members of the Senate for expenses without having to account for it.

There are differences in my party, as there are differences elsewhere, as to what level of increase there might be. But I am sure I remember correctly when I say that all my colleagues, when we discussed this matter some time ago, were unanimous in emphasizing that an increase in facilities and assistance for Members of Parliament in serving their constituents and their country is a more important matter than the question of an increase in salary. There is no adjustment whatsoever in the facilities which Members of Parliament are given although there is an increase in salaries and in expense allowances.

I knew when I rose that there would be catcalls, needing and catcalls round the House, but that is not going to stop me from making very clear the position I feel is the proper one. I suggest to the Prime Minister that the entire system in fact is wrong. I do not agree even with the appointment of a special committee or commission to deal with this matter. I think the time has come to place the salaries of Members of Parliament in some appropriate classification of the Public Service in order that members will obtain adjustments in the regular, annual way that public servants receive adjustments and will get no more than public servants receive from year to year.

Some hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Lewis: If all hon. members agree with the proposition—

An hon. Member: What classification?