

Interim Supply

Mégantic to interfere with the municipal affairs of a community.

Mr. Chairman, I believe in parliamentary immunity, but I believe also that any abuse of that immunity is wrong. The rights of parliament are often referred to in the house. You know, Mr. Chairman, the rights of parliament.

The dismissal of a single civil servant is enough to launch an investigation; however, in the case of honest citizens' families, I object to and dispute the validity of the statement made Wednesday in the house by the hon. member for Mégantic. I wonder whether this is what he means by respect for the human being, which he has advocated in his riding for many years.

I shall not labour the point any further but I hope that the hon. member for Mégantic will have enough intestinal fortitude to withdraw his remarks, but in any case he should apologize to the village and to the honest and industrious people of our area; he should apologize also to the families who are really hurt by the statement he made in the house, which statement is inaccurate and quite unworthy of a member of parliament.

[*English*]

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that this debate is taking place today and I hope that something will come of it. I am aware of the fact that there is reluctance on the part of many members to get involved in this particular discussion because of the limitation which is put upon us by our rule relating to the 30 day limit. However, I think the subject which has been raised by the member for Prince Edward-Lennox is an exceptionally important one. If this parliament were to concentrate only on that particular subject and was able to do something about it, then they would probably win the eternal gratitude of many of the people of this country.

I think this matter has been raised by a number of persons who have strong personal feelings about the increase in the cost of living which has a detrimental effect on a very large segment of our Canadian population. It is interesting to look at the person who raised this subject. He is a member who comes from an area where the average income is not very high. His knowledge of the farming problem in his area is considerable, and he knows that as the cost of every commodity rises his people suffer from it

[*Mr. Racine.*]

more and more and are helpless to do anything about it.

The same is true with regard to the member for Danforth, who supported the proposal made by the member for Prince Edward-Lennox. He used to provide voluntary legal counsel in his riding in Toronto to a large segment of the population who were not able to afford this type of service. I am sure that he is aware also of the thousands and thousands of people who are in serious difficulties owing to the disparity between their income and their need to maintain a decent standard of living. I believe his feelings for those people are deep.

I think the other member who spoke on this subject comes from Simcoe, a small riding in the central part of southern Ontario. He is a doctor who has for many years been connected with people of modest means. His profession makes him well aware of the great number of Canadians who are in desperate need of medical attention but cannot receive it. I myself know of people who have been able to go to a doctor because of the present medical insurance plans, have been given a prescription and then could not afford to buy the drugs.

Anyone here who has had a cold is well aware of the fact that when one goes to a drugstore to fill a prescription to fight off the effects of flu which has been prevalent in Ottawa, the bill for the 12 pills prescribed by the doctor will be anywhere from \$6 to \$12. This is away beyond the reach of many of those who are similarly afflicted and cannot afford drugs.

I am sure the Minister of Finance is interested in this problem. I am quite prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt—and it is doubtful at present, because we are not familiar with what he is really doing in this matter. I really think he is not the finance minister of this country at all. I do not think we have had a true finance minister for years. It is the establishment which runs the Department of Finance in Ottawa. This is a fact. I think it is also true of the other departments concerned with consumer affairs. I am positive that the minister has been advised that the interest rate on bank loans should be increased, and I am sure that this advice was given to him by the establishment. I am also aware of the fact that his caucus told him that if he did this, he would have to look for another job.

Mr. Knowles: He used to be part of the establishment.