

Members' Salaries

If we are not prepared to go in the direction I think we should go, that is, to eliminate this business of unaccountable expense allowances completely and say there are certain things in respect of which members should submit accounts—we should at least not increase the allowance unless there is some evidence placed before us and before the public to show that an increase is justifiable.

If the amendments we are proposing, or something similar to them, are not acceptable to the government, perhaps the government would propose something of the same substance in their own wording. If so, we would be prepared to support it. In the absence of such amendments, enormous damage is likely to be done to any restraint program that parliament tries to institute. We have already done a certain amount of damage, although I do not believe it is irreparable. If nothing is done, though, I think we will increase that damage and the credibility of members of parliament will come seriously into question. That is terribly important, Mr. Speaker. A democracy depends upon people having a high degree of confidence in the men and women they elect to serve them in the parliament of their country. If that credibility is diminished, if that confidence is reduced, then democracy itself is diminished and reduced.

While the money is always nice—and I am no different from anyone else; I never have enough money to do the things I want to do, and in some cases people have persuaded themselves that they desperately need this kind of money—we have to balance this against our special role as members of parliament. We are different from other people. We are not better—I am not suggesting that for a moment—but we are different. There are 264 of us, out of a population of 22 million in this country, and there is a special responsibility laid upon us. This special responsibility is not only laid upon us; it is one we have accepted as members of parliament.

Had we wished to make money, there are much better ways of making it than by being a member of parliament. Had we wanted fame or success, there are probably much better ways of achieving them than by being a member of parliament. Had we been seeking security, there are better ways to find it than by becoming a member of parliament. But we have chosen this special responsibility, and I therefore appeal to members to consider this aspect and to weigh it against the benefit of receiving a higher income, which is what anyone would like. That is really the question which has to be decided when determining our attitude toward these amendments.

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not need half an hour in which to speak on this occasion, because everything has been said, everything has been written. We have all received, I don't know how many letters or how many newspaper clippings telling us what should be done, and so on. Standing on my feet now, I am well aware that members from both sides of the House would prefer me to sit down. Nevertheless, I should like to say a few words.

When this bill was first brought in, setting the increase at 50 per cent, I was shocked. I said so then and I say so today in no uncertain terms. I said then that we must set an example. When the amount was reduced to 33½ per cent, I stated that if this amount could be justified I would

[Mr. Saltsman.]

support the proposition. As the previous speaker has told us, we are in a unique position. As members of the highest court in the land, we are here to set an example.

I believe I was quoted as long ago as December 19 as saying that if 50 per cent was asked for, we would be further ahead if we took 25 per cent, apart from the fact that it would look better in the eyes of the public. This is the reason I put down my amendment. I do not need to go on giving the reasons for it. It amounts to \$4,500 in hard cash. I am not good at the intricacies of fractions, and so on; but I think the House should give consideration to this amendment on the basis of setting an example to segments of labour in other parts of the country which are asking for outrageous salary increases. If we accept something which is pretty high, then, of course, all they will do is point the finger of scorn at us. I hope the House will consider my amendment favourably, and I trust we shall be able to get along on what is proposed.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp), whose motion we are discussing, should not be here.

An hon. Member: Oh, come on! Be reasonable. He has just stepped out for two minutes.

Mr. Peters: I am simply curious.

An hon. Member: You were not here last week at all.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Why doesn't the minister speak to his own motion?

An hon. Member: That is very mean.

• (1550)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Why doesn't he speak to it?

Mr. Peters: I am curious as to why he is not here.

Mr. Lefebvre: He is here more often than you are.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Then why doesn't he speak to his own motion?

Mr. Peters: I hope the *Hansard* reporters are able to get some of these comments from members who cannot make speeches from their feet but do so from their seats. At least it will be noted in *Hansard* that they have done something, which is more than they are likely to do in other instances.

I am concerned with the way parliament handles our salaries. I was interested to hear the comments of the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman), some of which I agree with. I think members of parliament, and perhaps members of the public as well, should give consideration to a remark that was made this afternoon by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) which I think is apropos this debate. When someone mentioned his deputy minister and asked whether the minister intended to do something about him, the minister said—I am paraphrasing him—that he was doing the job he was supposed to do