

*Salaries Act*

I had occasion to look up the history of the \$2,000 car allowance which cabinet ministers also receive. The details of this will be found in *Hansard* of August 1, 1931, at pages 4506 and 4507. Up to that time one of the perquisites of a cabinet minister was to have a car and chauffeur at his disposal. This was abolished in that year and when Mr. Bennett was introducing the legislation he stated that this represented a saving to the crown of \$5,000 per month. He also expressed some views about the salaries of cabinet ministers which I shall not read, but they might make interesting reading for hon. members who may think that cabinet ministers are overpaid. That was certainly not his opinion when speaking in 1931. I do not know that I have anything further to say.

I believe we all agree that the chief executive of this country is not paid an amount comparable to what is paid to his opposite number either in the United States or in the United Kingdom. It is probably the position of the greatest responsibility among all positions of responsibility in this dominion of Canada.

Cabinet ministers also have a heavy responsibility and I suggest they work hard. I do not know of any class of executives who work longer hours or have greater responsibilities than the members of the government here in Canada. I believe the proposals contained in the bill are reasonable and I hope they will commend themselves to hon. members of this house.

**Hon. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, this bill is in fact closely related to the measure which has already been before the house, and the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) so indicated when he discussed both bills in his statement on the other measure with which we have already dealt.

Some time having elapsed, I should like briefly to place on record some of the statements made by the Prime Minister in relation to this subject so that it may be in context with the statement I wish to make.

On January 26, when the measure dealing with allowances to hon. members was before the house, the Prime Minister at the same time dealt with this measure in these words, as reported at page 1453 of *Hansard*:

I turn now to the second proposal in the resolution which is that the salaries of ministers of the crown and of the Speakers and leaders in the houses of parliament should be increased. These salaries have not been altered since 1920. This fact, in itself, is perhaps all the argument needed to explain why an increase in salaries might be justified at this time. I do not think anyone would question the statement that ministers of the crown have full-time jobs of an exacting character, with

heavy responsibilities. Under our constitutional system, the same is true of the position of the leader of the official opposition. I doubt if anyone who occupies one of these positions expects the remuneration to be comparable with the rewards open to persons of equal ability in private life, either in business or in the professions. I am sure no one expects, either, that the contrast will be too great.

I then pass on to a statement made later by the Prime Minister:

This seems to be still a most modest amount compared with the salaries and earnings of most Canadians with senior executive positions in business or in the higher reaches of the professions. There is another reason, perhaps not an important one, but still one that is worthy of some consideration, for increasing the remuneration of ministers. In the nature of things a reasonable relationship must be maintained between the remuneration of ministers and the salaries of the senior public servants.

I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, there will be disagreement with what the Prime Minister said in the words I have quoted, or substantial disagreement with what the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Howe) has said this afternoon.

The question, however, is one which raises another point. How are we to deal with matters of this kind? On other occasions changes of this nature have called for inquiry by a committee or by some other body which might examine the subject and make recommendations, after having considered the alternatives which present themselves.

The suggestion made by some hon. members, that this was handing over the responsibilities of parliament, is simply an evasion in terms of the normal practice, and would in fact apply with equal force to any other case where a matter is referred to a committee. We are constantly referring subjects of this kind to committees, to find out what alternative methods present themselves as an answer to the problem that undoubtedly is raised.

I believe there will be general agreement with what the Acting Prime Minister has said about the necessity for recognizing the responsibilities of the office of prime minister of Canada, and assuring that this office may be carried out efficiently, from the administrative and the parliamentary point of view, and also from the point of view of accepting those various social and other obligations that are an essential incidental requirement of the office itself. I might add that they have their important place in the fulfilment of the responsibilities of that office.

But, Mr. Speaker, the question which is before us here is one that does present alternatives. That is the thought I would like to leave most firmly in the minds of hon. members. There are alternative methods, and we should have had an opportunity