

Members' Acceptance of Fees from C.B.C.

of emolument is not in keeping with a member's responsibility. A member of the House of Commons must not under any circumstances, legally or otherwise, accept payments from an institution which, as I said a moment ago, receives so much of what is spent for the Canadian people.

Mr. McIlraith: Would the right hon. gentleman now permit a question? My question is this: Did the right hon. gentleman realize that he reflected on the character of each member of the House of Commons when he said that the only reason that members of parliament had not accepted payment from the C.B.C. was that the C.B.C. had not offered it to them?

Mr. Speaker: I propose to allow the right hon. gentleman to answer the question if he wishes to do so, but I have some doubt as to the propriety of putting such questions. I may have made a mistake in the first place, when I allowed the minister to ask a question. I believe the practice we have tried to follow on ministerial statements until now has been to allow a statement and comments on it. If we allow questions on the statements made by spokesmen on behalf of parties we will start full debates every day on the different statements that are made. However, as I said, the question having been asked, I am certain the right hon. gentleman should be given an opportunity to reply to it.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It is very clear that the C.B.C. said no more payments would be made. The fact that payments had been accepted up to that time is sufficient of itself to answer the question of the Minister of Public Works.

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order. When a similar statement was made the other day the Chair wasted no time in ruling a backbencher out of order. The backbencher was me.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have just admitted that perhaps I should not have allowed the minister to speak, but I did so, and hope that no such occasion will arise in the future.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, the members of this party are in agreement with the statement which has been made by the Prime Minister, but we feel that some clarification should be made of the positions of hon. members with respect to the C.B.C. Conflicting rulings have been handed down from time to time by the Department of Justice as to whether or not members could accept out of pocket expenses. There has been

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

a good deal of misunderstanding with respect to this point. This has not been merely an oversight on the part of the C.B.C.

I have received a letter from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation dated February 21, 1964. I am quite prepared to table it so that any hon. member can read it. I myself will paraphrase it. The writer, Mr. Alfred Scott, program organizer for "Front Page Challenge" quotes sections 15 and 16 of the Senate and House of Commons Act. He proceeds to say that because of these sections no honorarium will be paid. However, the act does permit the C.B.C. to pay out of pocket expenses, and he encloses a cheque for \$50. I sent him a personal cheque for \$38 by return mail because my out of pocket expenses were \$12. No member wants to contravene the law for \$12,—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

An hon. Member: That is an admission.

Mr. Speaker: May we have order please.

Mr. Douglas:—nor would he want to do so for any other sum. I am simply seeking to point this out.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter which hon. members should discuss seriously. An agency of the crown writes to members of parliament, quotes the Senate and House of Commons Act, and says that in its opinion, on the basis of legal advice, it is permitted to pay out of pocket expenses. It does not even ask for an itemized account. In this case I personally returned the major part of the payment and I gave an itemized account.

This places hon. members in a very invidious position. If the ruling of the Department of Justice is that members cannot accept out of pocket expenses, then the C.B.C. should not send members expense money and should make it perfectly clear to members that they are not entitled to accept it.

● (3:30 p.m.)

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this matter ought to be clarified. It ought to be made clear once and for all that not only can the C.B.C. not pay fees to members of parliament or members of the Senate, but that they cannot pay those members out of pocket expenses. As long as this situation is left in its present state of ambiguity, there will always be this difficulty.

As the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) has said, it may be that some legislation will be