

Judges Act

their percentage increases are 38 per cent, 41 per cent, 42 per cent, 48 per cent and 51 per cent. In actual dollars their increases are \$12,000, \$14,000, \$15,000, \$16,000 and \$18,000. In the case of the two sets of judges who get the highest percentage increases of 48 per cent and 51 per cent, there is built into the bill in one case another 16 per cent and in the other another 17 per cent increase in 1976.

The point of all this is that for all that I was prepared to agree about the respect we owe judges and the things we must do to make sure they are free from economic concern, I think this bill goes too far, and in particular I think it is an insult to the country as a whole for the government to be discussing wage restraints of 12 per cent per year, or \$2,400, whichever is the lesser, and at the same time to provide these kinds of increases for the judges of the various courts of this country. I believe I was completely fair when I pointed out that I was not asking for an increase of only \$2,400 because there has been no increase for the judges for four years, but even four years at \$2,400 is \$9,600 and yet the lowest increase in terms of dollars any of the judges would get would be \$12,000, and it goes on up to \$18,000. I submit that in light of the economic problems we face and the appeal being made to Canadians to get together in some kind of a program that will lick inflation, this is hardly an appropriate course to follow.

I hope I made it clear this afternoon that we regard very highly the judiciary of this country. We respect those who are on the Bench in the various courts of Canada, but we feel they should be part of the rest of us in trying to cope with our economic problems today, and that they, just as some of us felt we in this House should also not do, should not seek to go beyond the kinds of restraints being suggested by the federal government at this time.

● (2010)

I suspect that my 40 minutes must be just about over and I shall not try to develop any further arguments at this time. There are things in the bill on which I would like to have commented favourably. Let me pick out just one. If I read the bill correctly—having made a mistake this afternoon, I suppose I had better put in that qualification—I believe that some of the pension provisions for widows are being made retroactive, that there are cases of widows of judges who are now on pensions of a certain amount who will get an increase under the provisions of this bill. I see the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) nodding his head vertically—

Mr. Rodriguez: I have also seen him nodding horizontally.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I am glad to know I am correct in that. I just hope this is a precedent that will be copied in other legislation.

If I may speak of some who may be known to members of this House, there are widows of former members of parliament who have no pension at all because their husbands left the House before there was a widows' provision. I can also think of widows in other categories, such as widows of retired civil servants, and I hope that the principle of retroactive pension increases for certain widows will be carried forward into other legislation.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

I gave you notice, Mr. Speaker, just before five o'clock, of an amendment that I wish to move. I indicated at that time that I copied an expert in this field, my friend and neighbour of only a seat or two away, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence).

Mr. Rodriguez: An expert?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): He is an expert in that he is the only member of this thirtieth parliament who has moved a reasoned amendment that has been accepted. I hope the House will treat this amendment with the seriousness with which we put it forward. We present it in the context of the economic problems facing Canada today.

I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin):

That all the words after the word "That" be struck out, and that the following be substituted therefor:

"this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-47 because it fails to limit the salary increases contained therein to the restraint limits proposed by the government, namely that executive and professional salaries should not be increased by more than 12 per cent or \$2,400 per year, whichever is the lesser".

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Some mention has been made of the difficulty in putting forward reasoned amendments at the second reading stage. Are there any hon. members who would wish to assist the Chair before we come to a decision on this?

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make two specific points about this. In the first place I would draw Your Honour's attention to the fact that this motion indicates that some restraint limits are proposed by the government. My understanding is that the government has not proposed any direct restrictions on salaries and wages. What the government has done is to make a proposal that is open to negotiation, and those negotiations are still going on. The second part of the argument based on that is that these increases are designed to cover a number of years, not just one year.

The second point I wish to make is that if one reads the amendment carefully I believe it can be interpreted as a direct negative against the whole principle of the bill, which is to provide increases for the members of the Canadian judicial system, increases which they have not had over a substantial span of years. Therefore if the hon. member wishes to make that point, it seems to me that the best way he can make it is for him and those who support that point of view to vote against the bill on second reading.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, in replying to the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Reid) may I refer first to one argument which he used, but which I think he would admit was in terms of substance rather than procedure. He argued that the increase being proposed for the judges is one that covers several years, not just one year. I asserted that in the substantial part of my speech, and pointed out that I was asking for a comparison to be made for four years at \$2,400 and the amounts that are in the bill.