

An hon. Member: A bunch of hungry hogs.

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether members of the government party want to howl down people who have a contribution to make to this debate, or not. I suggest to them it would be more dignified and in keeping with their position as members of parliament if they allowed other members of parliament to present their arguments, whether they agree with them or not.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brewin: There can be no doubt whatever that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) was absolutely right, as were other members of the government, and indeed as was the Official Opposition when they called for restraint in respect to income, whether that restraint be voluntary or imposed. But I ask: how on earth can members of parliament, or the government expect restraint on the part of others—particularly those on the other end of the income scale—when they themselves, acting on their own behalf, call for increases well above the increased cost of living?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brewin: I want to make it clear that the effect of this increase, if we pass this bill, will be drastically to increase inflation. That is what we are being asked to vote for here. Does anybody doubt that if we take 50 per cent, or the equivalent under some revised formula, that the effect all over the country will be higher demands justified by the argument that parliament did it?

Although there are others in this House who sincerely differ from me, it seems to me that we in parliament will forfeit our position of leadership if we are to accept this legislation. As far as I am concerned the credibility of parliament, respect for parliament among the people, is a primary objective. I have as a member of this House and I would hate to do anything which, in my opinion, brought parliament into contempt. I must say an unjustified increase such as is proposed here would do precisely that. I am prepared that there should be some increase, tied to the cost of living.

Mr. Chrétien: How much? Put a figure!

Mr. Brewin: I am not in the government. I am not going to lay down an exact figure.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Brewin: As far as I am concerned, what my parliamentary leader sought to do was an eminently reasonable proposition, and I accept it.

I should like to see the whole question of allowances for expenses reviewed. While there should be some relatively small fixed allowance for the hidden extra cost involved in being a member of parliament, generally speaking, expenses should be strictly accountable. This seems to me to be only just. It is obvious that some members have far greater expenses than others and therefore, in effect, there are serious inequities as between members under the present system. Some, because of the higher expenses they

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must incur, are penalized in terms of real income. This is unjust, and I think this should be changed.

There is another basic reason why I oppose this legislation. It is that I believe we should be working toward a more equitable distribution of wealth and income. Every time we increase on a percentage basis the salaries of people at the upper levels, we exaggerate the gap between the rich and the poor. It is my philosophy, and I believe it is the philosophy of my party, to reduce, not to increase, these gaps. One of the propositions in the bill I find least satisfactory is the proposal to increase substantially the salaries of cabinet ministers and other members of the government.

The next point I wish to make relates to the amendment on which we shall have a ruling shortly. We should not be the judges of our own case.

Mr. Sharp: Who else could be? Who is superior to us?

Mr. Brewin: We should never act on these matters except on the basis of recommendations of an independent commission truly representative of the people of Canada when it comes to determining our own salaries.

Mr. Olivier: What about the Beaupré Commission?

Mr. Brewin: I say, Mr. Speaker, that we should not act—

Mr. Sharp: Would the hon. gentleman permit a question? The question I would ask him in the light of his comments is this: why, then, did he oppose the Beaupré Commission?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brewin: I frankly do not recall it. I do not recall that the Beaupré Commission report was ever brought before this House. I do not know why he says I opposed it. The government itself didn't have the guts to bring that report to the House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order. The hon. member for Greenwood has the floor and the House should permit him to make his remarks without these interruptions.

Mr. Brewin: I find it difficult to believe that of all the groups in this country the only people to set their own salaries without any interference from anyone else should be the particular group in this House. I say it would be more sane and more helpful to parliament itself if we were to refer this matter to a commission representative of the people, rather than go through this hassle year after year.

Mr. Roy (Laval): On a point of order, might I put a question to the hon. member? Does he still practise law in Toronto and receive another revenue from doing so?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order, please. I doubt very much whether an hon. member should rise on a point of order for the purpose of addressing a question to a member who has been recognized.