

Senate and House of Commons Act

theless real and important and have always been recognized as an integral part of the job of representing the electorate of Canada.

The simple fact is that constituents expect and are entitled to a certain amount of attention and service from their member and, in the modern context, usually the provision of these services costs money. In addition to that, Members of Parliament have certain duties imposed upon them by the electorate. They are not always in a position to pick and choose what they shall do and what they shall not do. We, who serve as Members of Parliament, all know that often times we respond to the requirements and needs of the constituents we serve at a time when we have carefully determined goals for ourselves. That is to be expected and it is quite supportable.

Members of Parliament are not always in a position to control the time spent on their jobs, nor do they have nicely categorized responsibilities and carefully determined jobs to which they can direct their attention. A member is usually and willingly at the beck and call of his constituents, and must at the same time serve his responsibilities in the House. These are important responsibilities which lie at the very heart of our democratic parliamentary system.

The late Mr. King, as Prime Minister, put the situation in these terms:

We cannot seek to detract from the importance of Parliament and we must afford to Members of Parliament that which will help them to preserve their independence and cause the best men in the country to enter its halls.

That objective is still modern and relevant, even though these words were spoken by Mr. King in 1945.

Even before the appointment of the Beaupré committee, it was obvious that members without independent means were unable to fulfil their responsibilities to their constituents and maintain a decent and reasonable standard of living for themselves and their families. The proposed measure is an attempt to deal with the problems, which members know better than anyone else, in a reasonable, honest and adequate fashion. The House will, of course, have the final determination of the proposals contained in this bill. The proposed bill has been put forward only after wide consultation and prolonged investigation by an independent committee and hon. members of the House. It is being introduced with the knowledge that it may not represent a perfect solution and that further study of this question will continue into the future, along with consideration of the role of the member in the functioning of the parliamentary system in the various ways in which members can be assisted to participate to the fullest extent in the adequate functioning of this institution.

These proposals are designed, in our view, to meet immediate requirements and alleviate present hardships. We believe that the goals suggested in the Beaupré report will be more directly attained by following the method outlined in the bill than by pursuing a course which may in the long run affect the status of elected members in a way not hitherto contemplated by Parliament.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

The provision of \$18,000 in indemnity and \$8,000 in expense allowance will assist members to meet the pressing problems of maintaining two residences and fulfilling their personal, family, parliamentary and constituency obligations in a reasonable way. The bill is put forward as a solution which it is hoped will meet the problems with which members have had to deal in recent years and which have formed the basis of change. If better solutions or more effective proposals can be brought forward, the government is disposed to listen with sympathy and attention for future consideration.

The bill also contains amendments to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. The amendments proposed are designed so there will be no increase in either the contributions or pensions payable as a result of the proposed amendments to sections 33 and 44 of the Senate and House of Commons Act. The amount of contribution which a member pays is a percentage of his sessional indemnity as defined in paragraph (2)(1)(d) of the act. As a member of the House of Commons has been contributing on the sum of \$12,000 sessional indemnity and \$6,000 expense allowance, or \$18,000 year only, there shall be no change in the level of contribution or the eventual pension as a result of the increase set out in the bill. Therefore, it is necessary to amend the definition of his sessional indemnity so that contributions will be made only on the net \$18,000 sessional allowance.

The effect of this amendment is really to maintain a status quo in respect of the level of contributions and the maximum pension possible to a Member of Parliament. Similarly, a Senator who is under the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act has been contributing on the sum of \$12,000 sessional indemnity and \$3,000 expense allowance, or \$15,000 a year. In order that he shall continue to contribute on \$15,000, it is necessary to amend the definition of his sessional indemnity. That is achieved by an amendment to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act.

Because it is of interest to members and to members of the other place, a Senator who is under the 1965 act which makes provision for the retirement of members of the Senate has been contributing on his \$12,000 sessional indemnity alone. An amendment proposed in this bill is designed to provide that he will continue to contribute and have his pension calculated on the basis of \$12,000 instead of the new allowance of \$18,000. No change in the rate of contribution is proposed. So much for the amendment to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act.

Special provisions are made for members representing northern constituencies because they are subject to heavy burdens of expenses. These provisions are spelled out in the bill and will go a long way toward ensuring for elected representatives a degree of personal security which will compare with that in other less uncertain professions and contribute, I am certain, to the more efficient discharge of their responsibilities to the public.

Also of some interest is the provision to widen the existing authority for providing assistance to members for legitimate transportation and telecommunications expenses. As Your Honour is aware, the capacity of the