

Statute Law Amendment Act, 1970

know there are variations in wages and salaries all across this country, and in pension plans. Pensions are not equal, and I do not expect them to be. I do not take issue because the pension plan for Members of Parliament is to be improved. So it should be.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: I do not deny that it should be, nor does the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). What I object to, and what he objects to is that Members of Parliament should improve their pension plan at a time when little is being done for other public servants and at a time when the government and Parliament ask working men of this country to tighten their belts. There is a time for things to be done. The workers always have a reason for asking that their incomes and pensions be increased.

Can anyone say that a worker earning \$4,000, \$6,000 or even \$8,000 a year does not deserve an increase, especially when one considers rising living costs? Yet we are saying to them, "Don't ask for a big increase: Ask for a little increase, say of 3 or 4 per cent. We do not say you do not deserve 7 or 8 per cent; we merely say this is not the time to give you 7 or 8 per cent." When you say that to the working people of Canada, I submit it is not the time for Members of Parliament to improve their own conditions. It is as simple as that.

This is not the time to bring down a bill that deals with 99 per cent of our public servants one way and merely escalates their pension by 2 per cent, and deals with the other 1 per cent of public servants who happen to be sitting in this chamber and in the other place in a different way and gives to them a completely new pension plan that will double their pensions.

Mr. Francis: And their contributions.

Mr. Lewis: I ask the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis): Are there not many civil servants in Ottawa, and would not the civil servants he represents be prepared to pay another percentage point of their income to receive the kind of pension the hon. member is ready to vote for himself?

Mr. Peters: If he tries to negotiate it, the government will say no.

Mr. Lewis: As my hon. friend for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) says, even if he tried to negotiate such a plan the government would say no to it. But in this chamber Members of

Parliament negotiate among themselves on this issue and the government says, "You can have better pensions because you like the idea."

Mr. Whicher: That is NDP twaddle.

Mr. Lewis: There are differences of opinion on this matter in the chamber, and I know that many people are angry because we are saying these things. Whether their anger stems from their disagreement or a guilty conscience is something they must decide.

An hon. Member: That's cheap.

Mr. Lewis: Those who support my argument are doing what they think is right, and others who disagree with us no doubt think they are right. They are welcome to their opinions, and I wish they would give me the right to state mine.

An hon. Member: Nobody is stopping you.

Mr. Lewis: This, in our view, is simply not the time to do this kind of thing with the pensions of Members of Parliament. At a time when similar provisions are not included for all other public servants, and when we are asking the people of Canada to take smaller increases in wages because the situation is such that they ought not to receive what they think they deserve, Members of Parliament cannot, I think, justify this kind of measure. That is why I am against it.

Mr. Whicher: That is not the position of the hon. gentleman's party in the Ontario legislature.

Mr. Lewis: If the hon. gentleman wishes to ask a question and has the courtesy to say so, I will permit him to ask it.

Mr. Whicher: Mr. Speaker, I wonder why my hon. friend has not had a chat with Donald MacDonald, the leader of the NDP in Ontario, who took an additional 100 per cent in the legislature at Toronto. He reached for it with both hands.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who asked the question was at one time, I think, a member of the Ontario legislature. He ought to ask Donald MacDonald, or John Robarts, or my son, about this. Frankly, I am not concerned about what Donald MacDonald, Stephen Lewis, John Robarts or anyone else did in the Ontario legislature. I am not a member of that legislature; I am a member of the House of Commons.