

Senate and House of Commons Act

before us is framed, I would have the same objections to it, but I doubt very much that it is.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Just one short supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member does not have the floor. The hon. member can make a speech if he wishes to do so. The hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland) can be deemed to still have the floor and allow a further question from the hon. member.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to thank the hon. member for Selkirk. In view of the proposed increase in the province of Manitoba, and in view of the fact that over and above the \$12,000 salary they are proposing to pay \$40 per committee meeting, I would ask the hon. member for Selkirk whether he favours that idea of the NDP government of Manitoba.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Rowland: By virtue of the fact that I have not seen the legislation, I can only repeat what I have already said to the hon. member.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, like many other members I am very concerned about this matter. I am concerned in the same way that I was in 1963. At that time we probably did not hold-out long enough to make any major change in the legislation. I am not sure whether we can do that at this time. It may be very well for a board of directors to arrive at a salary increase with the agreement of five or six of its members, knowing full well that the company they are operating belongs mostly to them: in most cases the directors control the majority of the stock, so it is not unreasonable for them to vote an increase in their own salaries. The other shareholders probably do not care very much about it.

● (9:00 p.m.)

In our case the shareholders care very much indeed, and their attitude is a reasonable one because they assess the situation in terms of their own wages and responsibilities. It is very hard to determine the responsibilities and duties of a Member of Parliament because they vary so much from one constituency to another. Many members over the years have given a great deal of themselves and sacrificed a great part of their family lives in representing their constituencies. They have gone much beyond what would normally be considered the normal call of parliamentary duty. On the other hand, there are members who don't do a damn thing in return for the money they get—and that is a fact. There are members who seldom, if ever, are here. I am sure we can all look around and think of people we only see a few times a year.

Mr. Baldwin: And there are some we see too much of.

[Mr. Rowland.]

Mr. Peters: That may well be true; but as long as this is a place for talk, anyone doing that is fulfilling part of his duty. My hon. friend who just finished speaking left me with the impression he would favour leaving the matter up to the voters. This would be an excellent way of doing it after an election, but I can imagine the chaos it would cause during an election. There are some who are sufficiently well-off to get on the negative side—"If you vote for me I will give the constituency \$50,000."

Mr. Hogarth: Arnold, take your money and sit down.

Mr. Peters: That is the easy way. That is what is wrong with this legislation. Some are saying the constituencies should have a voice in this, and I think they are right. For a long time the hardest wage negotiations in the unions were those conducted with their own staff. I have sat a number of times in talks with two large international unions when these matters were up for discussion. These are the people who negotiate on behalf of all their membership. They negotiate for all kinds of trades and they take whatever the traffic will bear. But when they start negotiations with a district director or national director, the shoe is on the other foot; it is a case of how cheaply they can run the organization and how much they can get away with.

When these representatives were negotiating with their own staffs they said: Let us be reasonable and fair, but let us keep it as cheap as we can get away with. This is partly the trouble we have in Parliament. I would be pleased to support this legislation if I were sure the committee would insist on doing something about the kind of negotiations we carry on. Surely we can attach ourselves to some segment of the civil service, not deputy ministers because the government decides what their salaries should be, but we should be able to attach ourselves to some senior division of the civil service on whose behalf bargaining is conducted by outside agencies. I realize the idea is not new; it has been mentioned by a number of others.

No doubt the government will make something of this debate, but I think the House is likely to do what the hon. member on the other side said, that is, sit down and take the money.

An hon. Member: You are going to take it.

Mr. Peters: Certainly I am going to take it. That is the part I don't like. The hon. member says I am going to take it. I represent one constituency of this country and as its representative I will get the same salary as any other member. It will be equal to any other. That remark was an insult; the kind of insult you always get from nincompoops. But I do not want to be sidetracked. Let me make it clear that in my opinion it is cheap politics for any member to say he intends to take less for his riding than other members who are paid to represent their constituencies. What I am suggesting is that we are doing a lousy job of deciding how to arrive at a suitable arrangement. But whatever is decided in the end will be the result of a majority decision in the House, and every constituency is entitled to the same amount of money no matter where it is situated.