

Senate and House of Commons Act

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a question, not being facetious. Was it not \$4,000 a session. You may have had only one session. Was it not \$4,000 a session?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It was \$4,000 a session.

Mr. Woolliams: Ah!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Just a minute—

An hon. Member: Try to be honest, Stanley!

• (12:50 p.m.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I know all hon. members want to hear the hon. member's speech, and I suggest that if there are questions they should be directed to the Chair.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, remarks like the last one may not be on the record since the hon. member did not make it from his own seat.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to dissociate myself from that remark. I was asking the hon. member for information, I was not trying to be facetious.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) asked whether that was not the rate per session, and it was; but it was not until 1949 and 1951 that there were a couple of occasions of two sessions per year. That did not happen in the early 1940s. At that time our total take home pay was \$4,000 per year, there is no question about that. That is an actual fact, and it is stated in answer to the word "honest" that was thrown at me a moment ago.

Now, Sir, 29 years later, or 31 years later for the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) and the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. McLraith), our total take home pay is \$18,000 a year, and that is an increase of 350 per cent. If we are going to throw these percentages around, let us really be honest and let us tell the whole story. It is an increase of 350 per cent over a period of 29 years, which is about 12 per cent a year. If the present bill goes through and the total take home pay becomes \$26,000 a year, for those of us who were here in the early 1940s it will be a total increase of 550 per cent or between 19 and 20 per cent per year. You can shoot that down in various ways; you can do all kinds of things with figures, but I submit that to try to tone down this present increase as though it were only 2½ per cent a year is not really treating the matter in a factual way. It is in fact a 50 per cent increase in salary and an over-all increase of 44.4 per cent.

I would also point out that in those early years not only was \$4,000 the total take home pay but there were no free airline flights. We had our railway passes and we could go back and forth as we wished to, but we got our berth and meals on the train for a trip from Ottawa to the constituency only three times a year, not 52 round trip air flights.

Mr. Comeau: Surely, we need that.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Of course we do, I am not arguing against that, but I am saying to my hon. friend that the improvement in the position of Members of Parliament over the last three decades has been tremendous, so let us not try to say that we are poor, that we do not have the facilities, that we are severely handicapped. The facilities that are made available to us today are much greater than they were, and these facilities actually add to our standard of living.

The argument is being made that we are not getting very much of an increase and that we are still hard-pressed. I have gone back and read some of the debates in the years when the pay increases were introduced. This is the fourth one that I have been through, and the same argument was always made. Members were having a tough time, and we have to pay higher salaries to attract better men. Yet, back in those early days when we were so poor that we had to raise the pay to attract better men, we did have people like C. D. Howe, James Isley, Mackenzie King, Gordon Graydon, R. B. Hanson, John Diefenbaker, Howard Green, M. J. Coldwell, and so on. Good and able people somehow seem to come to this place no matter what the rate of pay is.

Now, Sir, I am not arguing that we should go back to the days when there was no pay for Members of Parliament. I agree with the proposition that the salary of Members of Parliament should be such that they can do their job with at least a restricted amount of worry, but I would not restrict that worry to the point where they do not know what the life of the ordinary Canadian is. I agree that there has to be a reasonable level of pay, but I suggest that in today's circumstances, with pensions as low as they are, with wages being held down, and with the high level of unemployment facing this country, the present total of \$18,000 is a reasonable level. I certainly agree with the last two speakers that if any change is to be proposed it should not apply until the next Parliament, the one that meets after the next general election.

I see it is almost one o'clock and I am just about through. One of the arguments that is frequently used for increased pay for Members of Parliament is to compare the job we do with that of civil or public servants. Let us agree that there are deputy ministers and people much lower in the public service who now get more pay than we do, and of course comparisons are also made with persons in private business, and so on. Perhaps I am alone in this, perhaps it is a queer notion I have about it, but we are not people who have been hired to do a technical job for which certain training and certain qualifications are required.

We have asked to come here as representatives of the people, and I do not think that our salary level should be decided on the basis of people who dress as we do and occupy offices and work as we do. It should be decided on the basis of what we need to do a job to represent the Canadian people. It is my judgment, whether or not hon. members accept it, that something in the order of what we are now getting is a reasonable amount. I say quite candidly that I would not have objected and would not object if there were a modest increase, but it seems to me that an increase of 50 per cent in the salary and 33½