

service category or some average of appropriate categories; there are various ways in which it could be worked out. There would then be an automatic adjustment every year or two years.

• (8:10 p.m.)

I suggest the time is long overdue to improve the present system. We should take away from Members of Parliament the unpleasant duty of dealing with our own salaries and expenses and give this task to an independent body, or place the indemnity in some appropriate category in the public service in the way I have suggested. This proposal should have been embodied in the bill so that this would be the last time Members of Parliament had to go through this unpleasant exercise.

In closing, I want to make the point as seriously as I can that there is throughout the country widespread disenchantment with the democratic process and a great deal of dissatisfaction with the parliamentary process, particularly among young people. The slowness with which we do anything for the benefit of ordinary people, and our failure to meet basic problems in society have produced growing unhappiness with our parliamentary and democratic system. I am deeply concerned about the effect that this action now proposed by the government, in the circumstances I described earlier, will have on people who are already dissatisfied with our democratic process. I am concerned with the cynicism that it will evoke, particularly among the young, and the questions it will raise in the minds of many people in Canada.

Although I do not condemn any member who wants to support the bill before the House, I cannot but feel depressed by this further example of the double standard that our present system imposes and which Members of Parliament are willing to adopt. In our privileged position we are able to get what we ask for. The rest have to fight and wait for every niggardly improvement, be he worker, old age pensioner, farmer or fisherman. These groups have to argue, fight, demonstrate, protest, needle and threaten before getting some kind of niggardly improvement. But we in our privileged position can get because we are in a position to take. This is what worries me about our present system and the position of Parliament within that system, particularly the position in which all members of the House are being placed by the proposal we are discussing.

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, we are now considering Bill C-242 to increase the salaries and allowances of members of Parliament.

In the statement he made in this House on April 26 last, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said that the government intended to introduce legislation to increase the salaries of hon. members from \$12,000 to \$18,000 and the non taxable and non accountable allowances from \$6,000 to \$8,000. Right then, through the hon. member for Kamouraska (Mr. Dionne), the Ralliement créditiste members announced they were absolutely opposed to this measure. But the mass media have practically ignored this position.

Senate and House of Commons Act

Yesterday, at the opening of the sitting of the House, the bill was introduced for first reading. There is never a debate on first reading since it is only a formal introduction according to the rules governing our debates.

Nevertheless yesterday, without warning, the news media disclosed to the public unaware of course of our procedure that hon. members had unanimously agreed to the bill on first reading and that none of them had the opportunity to speak at this stage and to oppose it.

Mr. Speaker, we can see there the narrowmindedness and dishonesty of some news media that knowingly release controlled information to the Canadian people. However, it is common knowledge that no one can judge how a member feels about a bill simply because he refrains from speaking on first reading since there is no debate at this stage.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, we were going to make our position clear beyond all ambiguity.

This, then, is the official position of the Ralliement Créditiste.

I also want to point out that the leader of the Ralliement Créditiste, the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette), and the hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Rondeau) give their unqualified support to our views. They both did their very best to be here tonight, but they are now tied up in Alberta and it was absolutely impossible for them to change their schedules, arranged several weeks ahead. They could not foresee that the government would proceed with such speed to the debate on this matter. In any case, whether it seems funny or not to members opposite, to whom salaries are more important than services, be it said and understood that the Crédi-tistes have all taken the same position on this question, because they all think of their role as a public service and their devotion bears the most eloquent testimony to the performance of this task.

• (8:20 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Langlois: Speak loud, vote against it and take it.

An hon. Member: Bunch of hypocrites!

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Does the hon. member who just called us a bunch of hypocrites—

Mr. Laprise: Mr. Speaker, I rise also on a question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: Order! I see that the hon. members for Abitibi and Lotbinière are seeking the floor at the same time. There should be some order, and we should determine immediately who has the floor.

Mr. Laprise: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi on a question of privilege.