

Private Members' Business

In any event, during the interim it is a pleasure to speak in support of his bill. The public is looking for openness in government these days. As he very eloquently just said, as members of Parliament we certainly put forward our salaries and our benefits for public scrutiny. Perhaps it is a principle that should be followed, not by all individuals employed by the government, because for those who come under contract or Public Service Commission appointments, the information essentially is available, but for the Order in Council appointments to which the hon. member was referring.

He did not mention it, but I presume it is the intention of the legislation to include deputy ministers, ambassadors, people working in the Prime Minister's Office, ministers' staffs and people serving on boards and commissions. The public is looking for this because it wants the government to be open.

There is a danger in this that we should be very up front about, that is the mischief that can and indeed will be made by people with aspirations, whether they be lobby groups like the National Citizens Coalition which grabs on to things like benefits of members of Parliament and tries to use them for its own purposes to whip up public antagonism. It is possible it finds this helpful in its own fund raising. I would not say that is its motivation. That would be to attribute motive that I would not want to do, but one has to wonder from time to time about that sort of thing.

It is important for the public to realize that if we want good people in government, whether they be sitting in the House of Commons or as presidents of Crown corporations, the public has to be prepared to pay relatively competitive wages.

It is interesting to note with respect to Crown corporations that would seem to be somewhat the case, if I can believe what I read in *The Globe and Mail* this morning about the arrangements for Mr. Hopper. I certainly have nothing against Mr. Hopper, but I would not mind living the rest of my life on the departure benefits that he is purported to be getting. They said it is something like \$1.2 million as a severance, plus \$280,000 a year. On the other hand, anyone leaving a large corporation of comparable size probably is going out on just as good severance arrangements.

We have to be very conscious that while on the one hand we want to respond to this public aspiration for transparency in government, the public has a right to know what it is paying the people who work for it. At the same time there has to be some way of making sure it does not become a basis for mischief-making by people who want to haul down others in high places.

It always amazes me that people think it is appalling if someone employed by the government makes \$100,000 a year. They see that as an outrageous amount, but no one seems to be upset at the idea of paying baseball players \$6 million or \$7 million a year, whether or not they produce, I might add. Sometimes people say: "Yes, but politicians do not always produce". Baseball players do not always produce but they still get their multimillion dollar salaries.

I think there is a possibility for some mischief.

There are other things that hold us up to disrepute. My hon. friend mentioned the concept of double-dipping with, which I have a serious problem. I thought there used to be a principle that a person could not draw two salaries from the Crown at the same time yet it seems people can draw a pension and then return and get a salary at the same time. I really have a serious problem with that, whether it be members of Parliament who go on to other government service or by anybody else in government service. If people return to government service another way then they should have pension arrangements that allow them to continue to accrue a benefit but they should not be drawing two salaries at the same time.

It is the same with pension arrangements, which obviously have been subject to great discussion here. While the pension scheme for members of Parliament is not the subject of this particular piece of legislation I have believed for a long time, and have a private member's bill being drafted on this subject, that the most objectionable feature of the pension plan for members of Parliament is that it allows people to draw from it at a very young age. Probably 80 per cent of the objections to the pensions for members of Parliament is a result of the fact that members do not have to be of minimum age to draw it. We should change that to an age of about 55. If we also got rid of the double-dipping we would remove a very large part of the problem that the public has with the pensions for members of Parliament.