

Salaries Act

should be cut out altogether; I merely suggested that it should be dealt with in some other way, in some more satisfactory manner. I quoted Watson Sellar as being on my side of the case, and I shall do that again in a moment.

My point is that when the Salaries Act is being amended, when the whole question of the emoluments being paid to cabinet ministers is before the house, surely is the time to tidy up this matter and to decide once and for all, first, whether the motor car allowance is to be paid and, second, if so, how it is to be provided.

I contend from the reference I have just made to the appropriation statute of 1931, which is spent, that it should not be continued unless it is included in the Salaries Act which is now before us. As I say, I have raised this matter a number of times and I have always been appreciative of the manner in which the Prime Minister listened to my point of view. Perhaps it was in the hope that he would cut off my speech, and as a matter of fact he succeeded once or twice, but on one or two occasions he indicated that at the appropriate time items such as this would be tidied up.

I know just as well as Your Honour does that I cannot go into the details of the clauses of this bill, and I shall not do so, but the bill now before us does tidy up another point similar to this one. When we get into committee and are dealing with certain clauses of this bill to amend the Salaries Act I shall be able to point out that it tidies up the question of the salary of the secretary to the Governor General. For a number of years that item has been paid in two parts; there has been a salary of \$2,400 paid by statute and an item of \$7,600 in the estimates.

That is an item similar to the motor car allowance which Watson Sellar described as legislating by estimates. I shall quote Mr. Sellar in a moment. In response to my raising these items from time to time across the years, the question of the salary of the secretary to the governor general and the motor car allowances, the Prime Minister on two or three occasions has said that when the proper time came we would clean up these loose ends and put them on a proper basis.

If there ever was a proper time, this is it. My claim that it is a proper time is strengthened by the fact that this bill does clean up the question of the salary of the secretary to the Governor General. This bill will repeal the portion of that salary which is paid by statute and the blue book of estimates anticipates the passing of this bill—I am a little surprised at that—and includes

[Mr. Knowles.]

the whole of that salary as an item. My point is that if that untidy item is being cleared up, so should this question of the motor car allowances.

As I say, after we first ran into this matter in 1949 I did a little research on my own. I felt it was my right and indeed my duty to lay my views before the Auditor General and get his comments if he were prepared to give them to me. Mr. Watson Sellar wrote me on December 14, 1949, and I shall quote the first paragraph which reads:

Dear Mr. Knowles,

Replying to your letter of the 12th, may I say at the outset that perhaps I'm not the best person to interpret vote 352 of 1931, because I drafted it. I was then assistant deputy minister of finance, and as there was then no deputy minister in office, I was responsible for the routine in connection with the estimates book. The instructions were to prepare a "continuing" item and have the text approved by the then deputy minister of justice. Frankly, I was surprised when, some years later, it was ruled that the latter part of the text provided authority to appoint one of the chauffeurs who, in the interval, had served as the private chauffeur of the then prime minister, Mr. Bennett. I was in sympathy with the appointment, but had assumed continuity of employment was an implied condition of the text.

I want to interpolate, sir, and on this point I am not expressing anything that I seek to attribute to Mr. Watson Sellar, but my own opinion is that if Mr. Sellar was surprised that the wording of that text was interpreted to mean the provision of a position for someone who was not then an incumbent so far as the chauffeurs were concerned, the same argument might be applied to all the then incumbents of those various cabinet posts. All of them have since left the cabinet.

It may be that the purpose of this item was, as the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Howe) said today, to pursue Mr. Bennett's idea of economy. He found a way of saving \$5,000 a month for the public treasury, namely by doing away with the cars and chauffeurs for those various people, and giving them instead \$2,000 a year. The only comment I would make on that in so far as Mr. Bennett is concerned is to commend it. That differs from what the hon. member for Temiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) said the other night, but that is beside the point.

My point is that this was a temporary measure and the fact that it was a temporary measure is borne out by the manner in which it was dealt with, namely not by changing any statute or by making changes in the Salaries Act, but by an item in the estimates.

I said I was going to read only one paragraph from Mr. Sellar's letter, but I wish to read the next one:

On several occasions I have expressed the opinion to the public accounts committee that