

*Members' Salaries***THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT, THE SALARIES ACT AND THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES ACT**

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Sharp that Bill C-44, to amend the Senate and House of Commons Act, the Salaries Act and the Parliamentary Secretaries Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, there was not time for research into how, during the past 100 years or so, salary increases for members of parliament were brought about, but I would not be surprised to learn that there have been in the past instances similar to ours when uproars on the part of an alienated public were heard to reach as far as Parliament Hill.

In 1971 at least some of us here went through a similar experience, and at that time I made a mental note asking myself whether there was not a better way to provide elected representatives with salary increases when needed, which would be more adequate and more acceptable than the way we have proceeded so far in recent years.

It will take me only a few minutes to explain why I will be voting against this all-party bill. I disagree with the present bill on two counts—the approach, and the timing. Let me explain the problem of the approach. This bill was produced here internally with very little if any consultation with the outside world, and it was brought out into the open rather suddenly. It is no surprise that the public was rather dismayed and that a certain degree of resentment developed, but that does not mean that there are not many Canadians across the country who want to see their elected representatives well remunerated in order to enable them to do an adequate job.

As a result of that one wonders whether there is not a way to develop a bill with the support and understanding of Canadians. The obvious solution is the formation of a commission, and this is not a novel idea. It was a good idea when it was tried in 1970-71. Perhaps a larger and more representative group would be needed. This commission would serve at least two purposes. It would prepare public opinion because of its work, and it would provide a number of recommendations which it would be up to parliament to adopt subsequently in the form of a bill if they were acceptable. It may produce, for instance, one measure which I would very much welcome, namely, the removal of the tax exempt portion of elected representatives' salaries as a step which would be quite consistent with the measures introduced in 1972 by the then minister of finance through tax reform. The Beaupré Commission was a good idea, and it is one on which we could improve in the years to come.

The other reason for my voting against the bill is in relation to timing. It seems to me that any bill like this, or bills in future years for future parliaments, would be acceptable if it or they were to come into effect as of the date of the following election. It is true that in this case three years is a long time to wait, and it is true that it would mean a tightening of belts, but it would be an approach which would indicate our intentions, prepare the

[The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin).]

public, and develop greater public support for a measure of this kind.

If we consider this evening not only this bill but subsequent bills for, say, the next 50 years, if we were to have these two basic elements—the commission first to supply the data and the recommendations, and a bill which would come into effect as of the date of the following election—then it seems to me that we will have done a good job in considerably improving our present method.

I hope that hon. members will consider these two steps for this parliament and for future parliaments. I do not know whether I have convinced many or only a few—

An hon. Member: None.

Mr. Caccia:—that by adopting the procedure I have described tonight, we will have saved ourselves and the public much unnecessary grief. I have tried hard, Mr. Speaker, both in caucus and here, to convince hon. members, and there is at least full agreement on one point—our job is a rather unique job. We are legislators. At the same time we are the link between the people and the government, and we are those in whom the public has confidence and high respect. There are great satisfactions which can be derived from this kind of work and by playing these different roles.

I do not think we need to go through such experiences as we have between December and now if we were to adopt a procedure which will make the public part of the process rather than partially alienating the very same people who, in the end, would want to see members of parliament well remunerated.

Perhaps hon. members may see merits in these ideas. They are not really original. They are based on just plain common sense and motivated by the desire for searching for an approach which will spare elected representatives something which they do not deserve, namely, the criticism of the people they endeavour to represent in this House every day.

• (2010)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Olivier (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, I should like to know whether the previous speaker would be willing to answer a few questions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It could be done with the consent of the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia).

Would the hon. member accept a question?

Mr. Caccia: Certainly.

Mr. Olivier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member what he will be doing with the raise. Does he intend to give it to charitable institutions in his constituency. I would like him to tell us.

[English]

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I tried hard in this House and in caucus to put forward an alternative