

my expense allowance. Admittedly, my expenses were somewhat more than my expense allowance, but not much.

We now have certain additional benefits. Four times a year we are permitted to send out newsletters at public expense. That is a tremendous benefit and something we should take into account when talking about expense allowances. We are now allowed a very substantial amount for a constituency office and constituency officer. That also has to be taken into account. This is why I see no justification for increasing the expense allowance and certainly not for indexing it. If there is going to be any increase, it should be based on members of parliament accounting for the use of that money.

I want to say a few words about accounting for expense money. During the committee hearings, three members took exception to the position which I have outlined in the last few minutes, namely, that there is no need to increase the expense allowance and, if it is increased, it should be accountable by evidence that the money was spent in certain ways. A number of arguments arose in the committee. The first member who took issue with me was the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). I said that he is one who in fact has a grievance.

We have met that grievance by making special allowance for people who live in remote territories. Even though that special allowance is greater than that received by most members, it still may not be enough. If it is not enough for members who represent these large constituencies that are peculiar to Canada, they could submit their expenses. Even if they are twice as great as the amount allowed under this or the previous bill, I am sure most people would agree they are acceptable expenses.

I did not hear any member from Ottawa say that he has expenses far in excess of those permitted under the old legislation or this legislation. In fact, they do not. Members who live in Ottawa receive a windfall benefit from something that is really organized on a kind of mutual ground. Certainly they do not have the double-housing problem or the transportation problem of most members of parliament. They may not even have the same constituency office and constituency telephone problems of most members. We should try to be fair.

Members who live in or close to Ottawa should receive less than the amount now in the legislation. Those who live in the northern parts of Canada should perhaps receive substantially more than is provided for in the legislation. As long as some evidence is provided to show how the money is used, I am sure that would be acceptable to the public. The public understands that you cannot have the same population measure for representation in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. They know that because of the nature of this country it is more expensive to maintain democracy in the northern areas of Canada: they accept that and are happy to do so.

One member in committee was quite outraged by what I had to say. He said that he attends many weddings and has to give many gifts. He pointed out that the cost of those gifts sometimes exceeds \$2,000 a year. Was the hon. member trying to suggest that somehow the public has a responsibility to ensure that he has enough money to make gifts so that he can be a great fellow and be re-elected? We do a lot of that anyway. The public pays for a great

many things to help members of parliament become re-elected.

While newsletters, ostensibly, are reports of members of parliament, surely they have some political connotation attached to them. Certainly, newsletters are a way of reinforcing the work of a member of parliament. This is also true of constituency offices: they certainly enhance the ability of a member of parliament to get himself re-elected. Do we also have to start paying for wedding gifts out of the public treasury? I always thought that generosity was something one did not indulge in under certain circumstances, and it is true that if you have less money, if the expense allowance does not go up, you may not be able to give so much to the United Appeal, to the Red Feather, to Consave or to other kinds of organizations. But then we would not be in a position any different from that of any other citizen in this country who gives according to his ability to give.

● (1540)

It should not be a source of shame to a member of parliament to say, "We are not the highest paid income earners in this country. We can't count these contributions as deductions as if we were corporations; therefore I am going to give in harmony with my earnings." Everybody will understand that there is not some kind of bottomless pit. But what people will understand is an MP saying, "I need to be generous. Give me the money so I can be generous with it." Therefore, this whole business of saying we have terrible expenses, we buy raffle tickets and give to all kinds of organizations and therefore these expenses should be included in the expense allowance, strikes me as not being a legitimate argument at all. These things should come out of one's income and should not, in my opinion, come out of a separate public fund.

When the President of the Privy Council appeared before the committee and urged certain amendments, I put to him this question of the justification of expense allowances. I thought I was being fair when I told him that I had come to the conclusion that an increase in expense allowances was not justified. I also told him that other members of this House had reached the same conclusion. I asked him to demonstrate to me that we were not correct in our assumption.

I told the President of the Privy Council that I would be prepared to change my mind if he provided some substantial evidence to the committee justifying such an increase. His answer was that he had not conducted any research into this aspect and that he was not in a position to give the kind of answer I sought. I asked him why he had come to the conclusion that the increase was justified. He replied that other members had told him the increase was justified and that they required it. Surely, Mr. Speaker, on something like this which has aroused so much public anger, this provision more than any other is what sticks in the craw of the public—that we can not only vote ourselves an unaccountable expense allowance but that we should now be asking for an increase in that allowance.

It does not stop there, Mr. Speaker. Because we do it, municipal councils now do it, provincial governments now do it and heaven knows who else now does it. I think it is incumbent upon us at the very least to draw the line here.