

Statute Law Amendment Act, 1970

profit in being a public servant at this level I am quite willing to give all that profit to the starving people of Biafra or anywhere else. But there is no profit, and you know it. To criticize the positive parts of this bill is sheer hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. It is a cheap political attempt to put Members of Parliament on the spot, and particularly members of the government who have the courage to update their own pay and allowances and pension scheme.

Mr. Speaker, I have never heard a positive suggestion from my Socialist friends on how anybody will be able to pay their bills unless we update our pay and allowances, nor as to who is going to raise the money or work a little harder to do it. Reformer as I am, I might be tempted to give them some political support if they had the answer to that question. How are you going to get individual Canadians to work harder and serve their country better? I have tried to serve my country but I have never been thanked for it from that corner of the House. My pension troubles have never been raised and no lobby has ever suggested that war service should count. Why shouldn't war service count in other service pensions? I can only assume it is because they do not condone the fact that I served my country as a volunteer soldier—but I did it willingly and I am not whining. Mr. Speaker, the alternative is simple: they can give the money back to the Crown, if they do not want it. This would be one way of avoiding income tax on it, and I am sure it would be most welcome.

By and large I think this bill is a step in the right direction. As I said before, I think it puts an unnecessary strain on the government and on this House to talk about what our pay should be. Perhaps the matter should have been put into the hands of an independent commission, but then I suppose they would have said, "Another royal commission; another bunch of Grits looking for good jobs; another waste of the taxpayers' money."

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take up any more of the time of the House except to say that I think this measure is long overdue, particularly for younger members who have to think about their families and for professional men who have given up lucrative positions to come here and donate their time. To those who think we are overpaid now, or that we will be in the future, I say the door is open to give back to a grateful country any overpayment they happen to receive.

[Mr. Bigg.]

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to take part in the debate, and I do not intend to take very long. I have been rather astonished and distressed by the reaction of hon. members to the fact that there are some in this House who question the wisdom of an increase in members' pensions as proposed. I think hon. members who have talked the way the preceding speaker spoke have gall. What they lack in intelligence and understanding of what this question is about, they certainly make up in nerve and extravagance of expression.

Mr. Bigg: You are the richest Socialist I know in this country.

Mr. Lewis: I want to say to hon. members, on behalf of my colleagues, that they should not think that anyone of us who opposes this bill, or even anyone who supports it, is less than dedicated to serving the people of Canada and the Parliament of Canada.

Let us understand the basis of this discussion. My friend, the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) says that we will be paying for this pension; we will pay a larger proportion of our salary and expense allowance. But so will the public treasury, Mr. Speaker. I am certain that other public servants in Canada would be quite prepared to pay a larger proportion of their salaries in order to have it matched by a contribution from their employers so that their pensions might be improved.

● (3:20 p.m.)

I am not one who says the Member of Parliament should not enjoy an improved salary or pension until everyone else in Canada has reached his level. That is an impossible, wrong position to take. It is simply not practical or sensible. But I do say that when the government brings down a bill covering public servants like Members of Parliament, judges, members of the RCMP, Senators and veterans, it ought to cover and treat all public servants equally.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: That is my objection to this bill.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, will the hon. member permit a question? Is it his opinion that the pension plan for civil servants is even remotely related to the kind of plans existing in the other sectors described?

Mr. Lewis: Of course not. The hon. member must not think I am so ignorant as not to