

Members' Salaries

ment under the so-called compromise amendments would be greater than under the original 50 per cent increase proposal.

An hon. Member: What is your proposal?

Mr. Broadbent: My hon. friend wants to know our proposal. If he had taken part in the debate before Christmas, he might have learned it. He might even have contributed his own thoughts on the matter. Then we had phase three of the government's handling of this measure, which we witnessed yesterday and today. Today, the government House leader discussed the third set of amendments or, if I understand him correctly, really one basic change which the government is willing to consider in addition to the amendments he himself referred to before Christmas; that is, they are going to change the basis of escalation from the original amendments based on the average industrial composite index to some part thereof.

For the reasons which were referred to by the House leader of my party, the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas), and by myself and others before Christmas, we find these proposals—there are really only two, the 50 per cent increase and the 33½ per cent plus escalation—unacceptable. I want to stress that we do not find them unacceptable by our criteria. I hope that the government backbenchers who were indulging in some rather irresponsible heckling yesterday will consider the arguments made, not on this bill but some four years ago by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) which I, on behalf of my party, when speaking on this measure before Christmas accepted. The argument the Secretary of State for External Affairs made with reference to members' salaries contained two points. First, he said that salaries for members of parliament should be sufficient to provide them with the necessary resources to discharge their task. He was talking about having enough income at our disposal to have a constituency office, to conduct mailings, and so forth.

An hon. Member: That's not what he said.

Mr. Broadbent: The hon. member says that is not what the Secretary of State for External Affairs said. I quoted his words. The hon. member can check *Hansard* and find them. The minister was talking about our capacity to discharge our responsibilities, on the one hand, and he added another important criterion—and I say in all seriousness that this is a criterion we accept—namely, that incomes must be sufficient for members to maintain a decent and reasonable standard of living for themselves and their families.

The members of my party accept that criterion without qualification. We say that a man or woman elected to the House of Commons should not be expected to suffer a significant decline in his or her standard of living. The average person coming here should be able to cope, in a society which is basically as affluent as ours, in terms of living reasonably. We take that view. We do not believe that a member of parliament should be indulging in self-denial, just as we do not believe that any worker in a economy as affluent and productive as ours should have to experience self-denial.

[Mr. Broadbent.]

We have applied this criterion to members' salaries and have said that if we consider our last increase, we have experienced a real decline in our standard of living. We acknowledge that. Many members from all sides of the House have experienced hardship. We believe the majority of members of all parties want to change that situation, as we do. That point is beyond debate as far as we are concerned. But when we look at the level of income proposed by the government, and accepted in principle by the Conservative Party, we say that in our judgment it is too high. It does not meet the criteria so ably stated by the Secretary of State for External Affairs when he was government House leader. It goes well beyond that, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we object to it.

● (1600)

Before Christmas I tried to explain why we think it goes too far. Since 1970, members of parliament have seen a whole series of improvements in terms of facilities provided for them. Remember, Mr. Speaker, that was the first test which the minister applied when he was government House leader. Since 1970, public expense has paid for four newsletters per year, provided a constituency office and a secretary for that office, plane trip provisions have been extended and, in short, a lot of necessary—and I stress "necessary"—services have been provided to members of parliament. We support each of these. We think it is a good idea for the people of Canada to pay for services that enable members of parliament to do a good job. Anyone who quibbles with that idea has a mixed-up sense of priorities.

We say we cannot have it both ways, however. If, on the one hand, needed and improved services are provided to us, then we cannot simultaneously argue that the \$8,000 expense allowance should be improved. If the people of Canada have already paid for expanding our service to the community, as they have, how can we go back to them and ask for something more? I repeat, Mr. Speaker, we cannot have it both ways. If the needed services have been provided since the last increase, then in the judgment of the New Democratic Party there can be no justification for increasing the tax exempt allowance. In the context of this debate, we in this party say there should be no increase to the \$8,000 allowance because in the last four years the government has provided the facilities which many of us used to pay for out of our own pockets.

I want to make a personal reference to the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan) because he made a personal reference to me in the debate yesterday, saying that the argument I used before Christmas was hypocritical. He "snuck it in" at the end of his speech, saying something to the effect that one might say that kind of sophistry was a hypocritical argument. He did not want to say specifically that he thought it was hypocritical, but I must infer that is what he had in mind.

He said that in his view members of parliament had not formerly provided these services, and therefore it was hypocritical to use the argument that they were being provided. I say to him that I did provide such services. Out of my own pocket I paid for mailings to my constituents, for a constituency office and for help in that office. I do not say that in any boastful sense because I know that certain members of all parties did the same thing. I was