

Senate and House of Commons Act

[Translation]

FINANCE**QUEBEC—ALLEGED UNEQUAL TREATMENT RESPECTING STUDENTS LOANS**

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance.

In a very recent release from his department with regard to the federal government's expenditures under the student loans program, mention is made of the amount allocated to each province, and I note that, in spite of the fact that Quebec—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member should ask his question as quickly as possible, because the question period is over. He has a few minutes' grace to ask his question quickly.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought it was better for me to explain, but, at any rate, here is my question: How is it that, under the federal-provincial agreement concerning student loans, Quebec only received \$5,350,000 in 1970 and came in fourth place, when, with regard to population, it ranks second—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suggest to the hon. member that the question should be put on the order paper. If the matter is urgent, it could be debated at the time of adjournment.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): At ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker.

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[English]

THE BUDGET**REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES OF ELDERLY RETIRED PEOPLE**

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Monsieur l'Orateur, ma question est dirigée au Ministre des Finances. Will he assure us that some regard will be had for the circumstances of the elderly retired on fixed incomes in his presentation to us on June 18?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we always do our best to look after the old people.

● (3:00 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT****AMENDMENTS RESPECTING MEMBERS' SESSIONAL AND EXPENSE ALLOWANCES, ETC.**

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council) moved that Bill C-242, to amend the Senate and House of Commons Act, the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, and an act to make provision for the retirement of members of the Senate, be read the third time and do pass.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I listened to a bit of comment on CBC radio this morning and heard one of our press gallery friends make a rather cynical remark about the debate scheduled for this afternoon on this bill, third reading of which has now been called. The remark was to the effect that it is a foregone conclusion that this bill will be passed and wrapped up in no time because, after all, the members are anxious to get the money that will be provided when it is passed. I realize, Sir, that it is quite routine for us to regard remarks by friends in the press gallery, which may be cynical, as their view of us whether or not it is justified. I suggest, however, that in this instance it might be well for us to pause for a moment and realize that maybe that cynicism reflects a view held by a very large number of Canadians. I certainly know from my correspondence there are many Canadians who are offended by what the government has placed before us in Bill C-242. Even though it may be routine for this bill to be debated on third reading and passed by this House this afternoon, some of us feel we must still rise and state our very strong objection to it.

I may put members slightly to rest by saying that I have just five things to say. When I have only two or three things to say it can take me 40 minutes, but when I have five things to say I can do it in a lot less time. The first thing I want to say is that I am fully aware of the problems many Members of Parliament face in trying to balance their budgets on the amount of money they now receive as salary and expense allowance. I doubt if there is anyone in this Chamber for whom this is the only income who is not having difficulty, and I am included in that group. But, Mr. Speaker, we are here as representatives of the Canadian people and most Canadians when they have trouble trying to balance their budgets, have to sharpen their pencils and find ways to cope with reality. They do not have the opportunity just to vote themselves the necessary increase. I think, in the light of what most Canadians are coping with today, we should not give this offensive example of voting ourselves this substantial increase at this time.

The second thing I should like to say is that we are living at a time, in a Benson-type economy, when our people are being urged to practice restraint. We have guidelines of one kind or another. Trade unions are told they must not ask for too much money. All down the line the preachment is restraint. Since we are part of the parliamentary, and in that sense the governmental section of this country, it seems to me the maxim applies that we should practice what we preach. If restraint is being proclaimed as something others should follow, I suggest we should follow it ourselves. In my view, we are not showing restraint when, in one fell swoop, we raise our total income from the present \$12,000 salary and \$6,000 expense allowance, which is a total of \$18,000, to \$18,000 salary and \$8,000 expense allowance for a total of \$26,000. That is my second reason for once again rising to oppose this bill. Since we are preaching restraint we of all people should practice it.

My third reason for opposing this bill is that I do not like the elements of special privilege contained in it.