

fortunate who are in this situation often through no fault of their own.

The average worker in 1974 was making only \$8,677 a year, yet I hear my colleagues saying that they need an increase which will bring their salary to \$39,000 a year. Many of the arguments are legitimate because our lifestyles are different, but I still think that we are failing if we concentrate on the income of members of parliament and ignore narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor in this country. Our tax system has not narrowed the gap; and despite all the claims of the Liberal government that they are bringing in tax relief, it has not happened. We have five million Canadians living below the poverty line, and I think we have a responsibility to them as well as to ourselves to set some kind of example and to institute some kind of reform in our tax system. In 1970, 46 per cent of Canadian families earned less than \$8,000 a year, 61 per cent of Canadian families earned less than \$10,000 a year, and 86 per cent earned less than \$15,000 a year. I think we have a responsibility to them and not just to ourselves with regard to our salaries.

The failure of the government to redistribute wealth through our tax system places an additional burden on people in low income groups, as does the failure of this government to control inflation. Here we are saying, well, we are suffering from inflation but the difference is that we can do something about it for ourselves. We could do something about it for these people as well if the government had the courage to reform our tax system and the way in which wealth is distributed in this country. It does not do that, but it says that members of parliament must be protected. This is really following the philosophy of the capitalist system, that everybody is out for himself and the strong survive; the strong make claims, but the weak perish; that once in a while a token gesture can be made to keep the poor and disadvantaged quiet, and that is all that is necessary.

Corporations in this country can raise prices without justification. Don't tell me that there is a free market economy and competition to keep prices down, when we are into the stage of monopoly control. So corporations can increase prices without justification; but workers, when they want increased wages, have to justify it and bargain for it, both union and non-union workers—especially non-union workers, who are in a very weak position. Yet members of parliament who want a salary increase are not like the majority of Canadians. With whom do we bargain? We bargain with ourselves. Like the professional groups of doctors, lawyers and businessmen, we set our own prices, our own salaries, our own fees.

I say that is wrong, that no one should have that kind of unlimited power. That is why, if we are following the principle of bargaining which most people have to accept, one of the functions of the opposition is to stand up and make members justify a wage increase. We in the opposition are asking the government to bargain, to make their point as to why members need the kind of increase that the government is proposing. When we examine their arguments, we find them inadequate.

My parliamentary leader and other speakers from our caucus have outlined why we think it is unreasonable and inappropriate at this time to have a 50 per cent increase or

a 33½ per cent increase based on \$26,000. We have asked the government to justify this increase. Their arguments fall far short. We are in a period of almost runaway inflation; the government has failed to control it. We are at a time in our history when we have to show some leadership, some restraint so that we can expect others in our society to co-operate and restrain what I think are legitimate demands because of the failure of this government to control inflation.

I say that we are setting a very bad example and a dangerous one. More contracts are coming up for renegotiation in this year than in many previous years, and every worker in this country will say, "Members of parliament received a large increase. What makes them so much better than me? I will demand it as well". I predict that we will have a problem in the House a few months hence, and that we will be in the odious position of limiting the legitimate demands of workers while at the same time accepting this outrageous proposal by the government. A cost of living increase is justified, but we cannot accept or justify the proposal in this bill.

● (1710)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Call in the members.

The House divided on the amendment (Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre)) which was negatived on the following division:

● (1720)

(Division No. 27)

YEAS

Messrs.

Benjamin
Brewin
Broadbent
Cossitt
Darling

Douglas
(Nanaimo-Cowichan-
The Islands)
Knowles
(Winnipeg
North Centre)

Orlikow
O'Sullivan
Peters
Saltsman
Symes
Towers—13.