

As we have indicated many times, whatever argument there might be for an increase in the indemnities of members of parliament, we see no case whatsoever for an increase at this time in the expense allowances of the members of either of the two Houses. When arguments are made for an increase in what is called our salary, it is put forward that there have been increases in the cost of living for members of parliament as there have been increases in the cost of living for others. It is on that basis that that case is made. I do not agree with it, as I hope I have made very clear, and most of us in this party feel very strongly that whatever arguments might be made with respect to the indemnity, those arguments do not apply to our tax free expense allowance.

My leader, the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent), and others in this party have pointed out that since the expense allowance was last fixed at its present amount, which is \$8,000 for members of this House and \$4,000 for members of the other place, a great many things have been added to the list of those things that enable members of parliament to do their work, and which are paid for out of the public treasury. I wish to remind hon. members of a few of those things.

It used to be that the amount of printing we could get done free of charge was very little. The hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) pointed out this afternoon in another debate that there was a time when there were a number of mimeograph machines in various corridors in this building. Members joined together to purchase those machines to do some of the printing they wanted in order to send material to their constituents. The quantities of printing we can now get done free are voluminous.

The provisions regarding free mailing have been enlarged so that we are entitled to send to our constituents, free of charge, four household mailings a year. This means four times a year every member of this House can get a piece of printing done free, in the thousands, and the nature of that printing seems to be getting more and more elaborate as time goes on, and have it sent to the entire constituency free of charge.

Our telephone facilities have been increased. I am not complaining about these things, I am just pointing out that these are things that are now being paid for that were not paid for when the expense allowance was fixed at \$8,000 a year. We can telephone to almost anywhere in Canada; anywhere there is a seven digit telephone number. We also have certain facilities for telephoning to Ottawa when we are in our constituencies or in a number of other cities in this country.

Our travel arrangements have been greatly enlarged. If members opposite think that by chatting and cat-calling they are deterring me, I assure them they do the opposite. They encourage me to keep going. I was talking about the increase in travel. I hear members complaining about there not being enough in some cases. I remind hon. members that when I first came to this place we had railway passes that entitled us to travel on any railway train in Canada, anywhere at any time. However, we had to pay our other expenses such as berth and meals on all trips that we took, except for two round trips a year. That was the situation. We got our berth and meals twice a year from the constituency to Ottawa.

Members' Salaries

An hon. member says we were not here all the time. Others say that as a result of that we were here all the time. Members should make up their minds. I am not complaining about progress. However, I suggest that members who have had so many improvements in their travel arrangements that now we can have 52 air tickets a year, either to use between Ottawa and the constituency, or to use ten of those for trips anywhere in Canada, or six of those trips for one's spouse—

An hon. Member: What if you have two spouses?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There are no provisions for two spouses, and not for 52 spouses either. The hon. members can carry on with interruptions. However, the point I am making is that there have been these tremendous improvements in the facilities that are made available to members and that are paid for out of the public treasury.

There are improved facilities in our offices. There was a time when in most cases two members shared one secretary. After a while it was one secretary per member. Now there are two per member, and in many cases there are three.

There has recently been added the provision for up to \$6,000 for rental space for a constituency office, and money toward the salary for a person working in that office. These things are all good. They enable members to do their job better than used to be the case. I submit that because we have these more frequent contacts and these means of communication, we are able to do a better job than was done 20, 30 or 40 years ago. I suggest it also means we work a lot harder. I do not need to argue that point in this place. Everybody agrees we work hard. However, these things having been provided for us out of the public treasury, we do not feel that at this time we should be increasing the tax free expense allowance which in effect is part of our income.

I also make the point that in the public eye the idea of tax freedom for an amount of money for which we do not have to submit vouchers or make an accounting, is a form of discrimination in our favour and against the general public.

I remember when this tax free allowance idea was first brought in by that master craftsman, the Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, back in 1945. At that time the total income of members of parliament was \$4,000 a session. There was pressure on Mr. King and the cabinet of that day by the backbenchers for an increase. One can understand that. It goes on all the time. The increase that was sought was rather substantial. Mr. King did not like the idea of meeting the demand for a substantial increase so he came up with a clever notion that if the increase were only \$2,000 instead of a larger sum, but were made tax free, it would mean more to the members than if it were a larger sum and would have the advantage of sounding less offensive to the public.

● (2020)

Originally this tax free allowance was proposed for members of the House of Commons only, but there was a hue and cry in the other place about it and Their Honours let it be known that they would not pass the bill if it