

Members' Salaries

of whether or not consideration should be given to there being such increases. We can and have considered the question of what should be the amount of the salary increases, what should be the expense allowance, what should be the position with regard to retroactivity, with regard to ministers' salaries, and so on.

We have had an excellent debate in the House: it has been a hard debate and some very firm positions have been taken. In some cases there is a great gap separating certain members of the House, but it seems to me that the substantial majority of the members who have spoken, no matter what increases they are inclined to favour, approve the principle that certain adjustments should be made. That being the case, I certainly go along with the President of the Privy Council and say: Let us dispatch this matter to the committee. Let the committee, in light of what has been said in the debate and in light of instructions which the representatives may receive from their respective parties, make such amendments and proposals as they feel they should, following which the matter should come back to the House.

I urge the House to let the matter go to committee as soon as possible so that we can get on with other business. In saying that, I would point out that we have expressed some reservations inside and outside the House regarding some of the issues involved. We want to feel free in the committee to consider changes, for example, with regard to ministerial salaries, whether or not the amount of remuneration should be brought in line with the 33½ percent basis and similar proposals. There may well be some question as to retroactivity and other issues.

Certainly, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) spoke for the party when he indicated outside the House that somehow there should be incorporated into the bill a measure which would constitute an incentive in parliament to reduce the rate of inflation. I say that with full knowledge of the fact that for 4½ years this parliament has set a very good example to the rest of the country on the question of inflation by not asking for an increase in remuneration. Unfortunately, that example was not followed by other sectors of the economy, including governments federal, provincial and municipal, industry and labour—even including those guardians of public morality, the media. However, that is beside the point.

Despite the fact that the example we strove to set in the last 4½ years has not had much success, I still think we have an obligation to try to work out a formula—even if that formula were in the form of a ceiling—so that there would be an obvious desire, as members of the House and representatives of the people of Canada, within the limits of our ability as a parliament, as contrasted with the government, to do something about inflation. Such a ceiling might well be worked out in the committee as a result of motions, amendments and discussions which will take place there.

For that reason, and to that extent, I go along with what has been said by the President of the Privy Council and hope we will dispatch the matter to the committee so that it may come to a decision, bearing in mind what has been said in the House, and bring its views back to the House. We will then examine the results and deal with the question at that time.

● (1550)

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the House leader for the Conservative Party with amusement when early in his comments he said this debate has been lively, interesting and informative, or words to that effect.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): "Excellent."

Mr. Broadbent: "Excellent" is one specific adjective he used. If those terms are appropriate, he must have been using them to describe the contribution made by members of other political parties, because during the course of the debate yesterday, today and before Christmas no other Conservative contributed to it. Either his kind words were intended only for other political parties or he was patting himself on the back; I am not sure which.

In more serious vein, I would like to have heard a serious contribution from the Conservative Party as to where it stands on the principle of the bill and whether it is in accord with its own approach to the problems of the national economy. That party campaigned in last year's election on fiscal responsibility, on a reasonable incomes policy and on the need for restraint in the House of Commons. I would have thought we would have heard many sophisticated arguments justifying the bill—which still amounts to granting a 50 per cent increase—in terms of that framework, but we did not. We did not hear from the Conservative Party, nor did we hear from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), both of whom in recent months, since the election, have sounded like Conservative Party members in their statements about the need for restraint and reasonableness in terms of incomes policy.

I would have thought the least we could have expected from the government was a major speech in terms of the kind of leadership we in the House of Commons are supposed to be showing the rest of the country in these very difficult financial times. But we did not hear that either. Instead, we witnessed the low-key performance of the government House leader, which lasted almost three minutes, in order to justify the position of the government.

I want to go back, briefly, over the three stages of this bill. The bill was brought forward before Christmas on the assumption by the government that, with members desiring a Christmas break and some increase in pay, they could slip their iniquitous 50 per cent increase bill through the House of Commons very quickly. They learned that they could not do that. Two days later, after considerable thought and concentrated effort directed toward coming up with what the government described as a compromise measure, they introduced to the House, by way of a statement on motions, the set of amendments which was just referred to.

The ultimate intent of those amendments was to substantially reduce the 50 per cent increase, it was said. We, of course—myself and other members of my party—pointed out that it did not take the most brilliant mathematical mind in the country to conclude quickly from the amendments the government was going to introduce to Bill C-44, that by 1978 the cumulative income of members of parlia-