

Members' Salaries

● (1502)

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I just read in the clippings of today that the hon. member issued a press release yesterday nurturing unfounded fears and anxieties among the Canadian population as to the universality of payments of old age pensions and family allowances, which I think is absolutely unacceptable, irresponsible and wrong—false, of course. I should like to say that unfortunately they probably did not have the number of my office and I did not receive a copy of the member's said press release, and I would like to study that before answering the question.

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, I was quoting from *Hansard*. If the minister will review *Hansard* of November 23 and of December 1 she will see where the quotations were found. In view of the fact that she seems to be unwilling or unable to explain herself, I would ask the Acting Prime Minister whether he will tell the House if family allowances and old age pensions will be made selective in order to pay for a guaranteed annual income, or will they remain universal programs? I would like an unequivocal answer?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I can be quite unequivocal on that point. No decision has been made.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS
REMUNERATION OF MEMBERS

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before hearing the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) on a question of privilege, of which he has given the Chair notice, I have two matters outstanding which I think I ought to address to the House. The first has to do with members' remuneration.

As the end of 1977 is approaching rapidly, I felt certain that all hon. members would want me to give some consideration to the question of the application of increases of indemnities paid to members for 1978 and their relationship to anti-inflation guidelines.

Members will recall last year, in an effort to conform with both the letter and the spirit of the anti-inflation program, arrangements were made to pay members less than the \$2,400 permissible maximum, which was arranged through an increase of \$2,200 consisting of \$1,500 in salary and \$700 in expense allowance.

It is not easy to express these kind of increases in terms of an individual member's remuneration because, as is well known, there are regional variations in the allowances for members and, of course, there are some members who receive salary differentials on the basis of additional responsibilities over those of the ordinary member. However, using the formula provided in the anti-inflation program, that increase

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

translated last year, under this formula which basically relates to the global amount paid to all as a group, to 5.59 per cent of the total sum paid to members for salaries, allowances and benefits.

It was evident that members wanted to continue with a similar arrangement for 1978 and so, after consultation with House leaders and through them with the party caucuses, I wish to advise hon. members that the 1978 increases will be \$2,100, consisting of \$1,400 in salary and \$700 expense allowance. On the same basis of calculation this represents an increase of 4.96 per cent over the total sum paid to members of the House of Commons in salaries, allowances and benefits.

Special allowances, I think it should be emphasized, paid to members with additional responsibilities will remain unchanged, for the third consecutive year.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. A point of order was raised in respect of some items in the estimates which will be finalized tomorrow in the supplementary estimates. This relates to a point which was raised the last time around when items were contained in the supplementary estimates which were described as \$1 items, and which basically were objected to on the grounds that they were not purely supply items but in fact went beyond the limits of the supply procedure and extended into legislative authority.

I think all hon. members understand that the supply process is confined in its method of debate and exposure to the House in that it is put forward by way of an estimate which is examined by the committees of the House, and, at the end of that process when the estimate is deemed to be reported or in fact reported back to the House, it is dealt with rather quickly by way of a supply bill on the final supply day of the particular semester in which the estimate was originally advanced.

This is a process which has long been adhered to by the House which provides for an examination of the estimates in rather great detail, but does not provide for extensive debate between the various stages of the supply bill. As a result of that, it has long been a tenet of the House that supply ought to be confined strictly to the process for which it was intended, that is to say, for the purpose of putting forward by the government the estimate of money it needs, and then in turn the voting by the House of that money to the government, and not to be extended in any way into the legislative area, because legislation and legislated changes in substance are not intended to be part of supply, but rather ought to be part of the legislative process in the regular way which requires three readings, committee stage, and, in other words, ample opportunity for members to participate in debate and amendment.

Accordingly, the last time this argument was raised I indicated I thought it unfortunate we felt cramped by the process of argument on these points and, in the future, we ought to experiment with a process which would give the Chair an opportunity to hear these arguments in advance, rather than attempting to deal with them on the last allotted day when the whole supply process is finalized.