

Salaries Act

I should like, now, to turn to yesterday's debate on this subject, Madam Speaker. I do not often agree with the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp), but he said something yesterday which I can endorse. At page 5853 of *Hansard* he said:

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to recognize the continuing importance in our constitutional system of the functions discharged by lieutenant governors of the provinces—

He added that there ought not to be, as a matter of principle—a principle that everyone in this House can support, I am sure—continuation of the practice of having a variation in the salaries and remuneration paid to lieutenant governors dependent upon the size of the province in which they have the honour to be the Queen's representative. I think it is extremely important that this be recognized. After all, the functions are the same, the constitutional duties are the same and the representation asked of the office is the same. I think it is high time this legislation was brought in to change a principle that I gather has been in force for a great many years.

We do not support this bill to reward the "fortunate ten" in Canada, nor to denigrate those who are not so fortunate through no fault of their own but perhaps because their circumstances are beyond their control. We support the bill because we earnestly believe that the principle set forth in the bill regarding the amounts is proper. We also believe that we can debate this matter until the cows come home and never settle on what is a proper amount. We support the bill and believe that it ought to go to committee where the whole question can be examined in depth. I think this is a position worth taking.

The President of the Privy Council said that in the table of precedence in Canada, lieutenant governors rank immediately after the federal cabinet. I have reservations about that. I have very high regard for lieutenant governors of the provinces, and I do not know whether they should be placed below the "salt". Even placed in that position of some disadvantage, however, the office is worthy of Canadians of the highest calibre who from time to time are asked to accept it.

I have always taken the view that the salaries and allowances paid to people in public office, whether in the political sphere, the judicial sphere or, as in this case, the vice-regal sphere, ought never to be the enticement.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I hope the lone representative of the press gallery feels properly welcomed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I have said that I do not believe salaries and allowances ought to be the enticement into public life, but at the same time they ought not to be a deterrent to people wanting to continue in public life, on the one hand, or to good people wishing to enter public life, on the other hand. I have been shocked lately at the attitude of people who should know better with respect to this principle. This is a difficult balance to strike and I am sure in this legislation the government is attempting to find it. Whether they are successful will be

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

for the committee and, ultimately, this House to decide. The government must strive for the balance, however, so that when the Prime Minister of this country asks a man or a woman to become the lieutenant governor of a province, he or she will neither be deterred nor attracted by the remuneration but will be attracted by the opportunity presented for further public service.

● (1410)

What do I mean when I speak of further public service? I mean this: I am satisfied that no prime minister, no matter which party he leads, would select for office any person who has not demonstrated throughout his lifetime the ability and desire to serve the public of Canada. We should remember something else: public life entails sacrifices. I am new to public life and, in personal terms, I do not know all the sacrifices. I know that some have been in public life much longer than I or many members of this House. It is important not to overlook the sacrifices and penalties of public life, even though those in public life are not conscripts to it.

We should make sure that the sacrifices involved do not deter entry into public life of those about whom we have talked in the last few days. Today we are discussing the lieutenant governors of provinces—a small group. Judges form a larger group, and members of parliament, given the turnover in membership of this House, an even larger group. These groups are important to Canada. We should not lose sight of this fact. It is important for us not to become cynical. It is important for the media of this country not to be cynical about our institutions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): We must not deter good men and women from serving, because there is always a place in public life for those who want to serve. There is always a place for them at some level. As I say, today we are discussing those who hold the office of lieutenant governor of a province. We should not forget this. These days we see rhetoric in print, cynical newspaper reports and advertising the like of which I have never seen before. Such activities do nothing except denigrate those in public life in this country, denigrate this institution and, in some respects, come close to denigrating our courts. If we are not careful they can denigrate the office of the Queen's representatives in the provinces.

Lastly, I ask hon. members to remember that in the province the lieutenant governor performs the function of the Governor General of this country. His constitutional duties are similar to those of the Governor General. Speaking as a member of this House and as a Canadian, I want to entice good people to that office and not see such people deterred from seeking office because of extraneous considerations which have nothing to do with the office. I want people to seek that office for the sake of the duties of the office. I would like to be able to say that there is a reasonable hope of adequate recompense. That is really what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) meant last night when he said in the House that he supported this bill and wanted it to go to committee, where these questions can be discussed.