

Actually, in my opinion, the increase in salary is a little high; on the other hand, if there is to be another long lapse before another adjustment is made, it is not adequate, especially if the erosion of the value of the dollar continues in the future. I recognize that the government probably arrived at the figure of \$18,000 because they were not completely free to go below it when all considerations had been taken into account. One consideration is that we are amending the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. The retirement allowances that were provided by the amendments to the act last year were long overdue. They are now adequate, but no more than that. I do not agree with one aspect of that legislation, but on the whole the legislation which was passed last year is reasonable.

• (4:30 p.m.)

I do not think there was any justification or logic in making our allowances for expenses, now \$6,000 which will be increased to \$8,000, a part of the amount on which we should be able to contribute for our retirement. That was completely illogical. Even if the government has had to raise the salary figure a little higher than it intended, by making it \$18,000 and by amending the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, I am pleased that they thereby kept retirement contributions and benefits constant and now will have them only on the indemnity side of the benefits where they logically should be.

I wish to make a couple of other comments in passing. Although the minister did refer to it briefly, he did not say much about the fact that the government is not recommending any increase in the salaries of office holders, namely the cabinet, parliamentary secretaries, Speaker and others of that category. As a result of that, the differentiation between the remuneration of a backbencher and the office of Prime Minister, cabinet minister or Speaker has diminished substantially. That is as it should be.

When the very large differential was established between the sessional indemnity of a private member and a cabinet minister, it was justified because the office holders were required to remain in Ottawa and work all year. In those days, the sessions of Parliament were relatively short. At that time members of Parliament could apply some of their time in the course of the year to their ordinary occupation. That is no longer the case. The sessions of Parliament have increased to such a degree that not only the office holders but the private Members of Parliament are here virtually all year. This is a full-time job. There is not as much need for a wide differential between the two classes.

I recommend, however, that a review be made in the very near future of the pay of office holders. If and when this bill passes, a review of the position of office holders should be reviewed in the light of this legislation with a view to adjusting it upwards in some cases. I believe that the salary of the office of Speaker is not adequate. The position of members of the government should be reviewed, including the positions of Prime Minister,

Senate and House of Commons Act

Leader of the Opposition, parliamentary secretaries, whips and others.

An hon. Member: And House leaders.

Mr. MacLean: It is not appropriate that the person holding the office of Prime Minister of this great country should receive roughly the same remuneration as a deputy minister. That is what the position will be in the very near future. If it is not adjusted, it will not be too far from that. I have no firm recommendations to make on this at the moment, but it is something which should be reviewed in the not too distant future.

Amendments are also being made to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. As I have said, it was appropriate for the government to draw this bill in such a way that the increases in the sessional indemnity and allowances will not be changed with regard to the size of either the benefits or contributions to be made in connection with retiring allowances. It is appropriate that the contributions should be based only on the sessional indemnity total amount which Members of Parliament receive. That is as it should be.

Because this act is being opened, it gives me an opportunity to make an observation. There were a number of Members of Parliament in the last Parliament who for various reasons such as age and health are no longer members because they did not stand for Parliament in the last election. I am not speaking about the people who stood for Parliament and were defeated. That is their tough luck. I am referring to those who did not stand for Parliament in the last election. After long years of faithful service to the people of Canada, they forfeited the benefits which would have accrued to them had they been in this Parliament when the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act was amended. I realize it is difficult to do anything retroactive for ex-members of Parliament, but it is within the power of this government to compensate for this situation in other ways. I hope the government will examine the situation and make suitable appointments or something of that sort to a few outstanding cases in this field.

There is very little else I want to say at this time. I believe that most members of the party I represent are in agreement with this bill in principle. I hope it will be given second reading and referred to committee for detailed study within a reasonable time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my remarks by saying to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) that I very much appreciate the tone in which he introduced the bill and the sincerity with which he obviously spoke. I appreciated his approach to it in a way that did the best that could be done for the bill which he presented. Even though I am going to express opposition to it, I hope that in my remarks I can match the same approach of responsible discussion as he did in the introduction of this bill.