

Senate and House of Commons Act

There should be provision, up to a maximum, for sending out reprints of *Hansard* so that constituents are aware of the position which their members take on various questions debated in the House. There ought to be greater facilities for research if members are to make a useful contribution to this House and, particularly, to the standing committees of the House. Members ought to have research facilities and assistance.

In saying these things, I am not unmindful of the fact that all these facilities have been tremendously improved since the time I first became a member of this House. However, instead of giving to the members a flat sum of \$8,000 which will be tax free, we would be better advised to follow the recommendation of the Beaupré commission and say that there should be certain sums of money from which a member may draw in servicing his or her constituency and that he or she will be reimbursed for any such expenditures on a voucherable and accountable basis. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) took the opposite view on this matter. He said, as recorded at page 5353 of *Hansard*:

In my judgment, in view of the other responsibilities we exercise daily, it is not too great a responsibility to give this opportunity to a member to decide how he will determine the allocation of the \$8,000 and not oblige him to come back and have his accounts vetted by a member of the bureaucracy who normally is interrogated, questioned and brought to heel by elected Members of Parliament.

Most of us have just gone through the experience of filing our income tax returns. These, of course, are vetted and examined by the bureaucracy. Several million Canadians have their requests for tax exemptions vetted by the bureaucracy. I do not think there is any reason that Members of Parliament should be treated differently. Professional and self-employed persons who must spend money which is not income, but is used to enable them to perform their functions, must submit vouchers. They must give an account of any money which they spend. I see no reason why members of Parliament should not be required to do the same. The only way the public can be sure that the money which we receive for the purpose of servicing our constituencies is properly used is to have it accountable and voucherable. They will then know that the money which we receive, ostensibly for servicing our constituencies, is actually spent on servicing our constituencies.

● (4:20 p.m.)

Some controversy has arisen as to what members will do with the extra remuneration if this legislation passes. The other day the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond-Delta (Mr. Goode) challenged me and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party to make a statement as to what we propose to do. I can understand the hon. member feeling that perhaps he has to pay some conscience money to atone for the government's inconsistency in its treatment of parliamentarians as compared with other sections of the population. This is a matter which each hon. member has to decide for himself. I do not propose to criticize anyone else; each member will have to decide what he will do with the extra remuneration in the event that

[Mr. Douglas.]

this legislation is passed. As far as I am concerned, I do not propose to follow the example of one hon. member who spoke earlier this afternoon and turn it back to the Crown; I am not anxious to help finance the refitting of another *Bonaventure* or the construction of a port which nobody is going to use. But I am determined in my mind to ensure that no additional income will accrue to me, personally. I propose to use this money, if it is made available, to do the things which the Beaupré committee recommended should be done, namely, to see to it that additional services are provided to my constituents so that I am able to serve them more effectively and more efficiently. I hope to be able to provide increased services in my constituency, to provide for an office and a staff and to do a greater amount of coverage by sending constituents reprints of *Hansard* and other information at my own expense. That is what will be done if this legislation passes.

However, I do not think we ought to take it for granted that this legislation will pass. I should like to make a plea to the government not to move with any indecent haste. The worst thing that could happen to the image of Parliament would be for this legislation to be hurried through the House and whipped through subsequent proceedings in the standing committee and in this chamber. After all, we take time in which to discuss many other questions which will have less impact on the public than the one before us. I should like to plead that when this bill goes to the standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, we should seriously consider two things. First, we should seriously consider removing the tax-free allowance, and draw up a list of constituency services in respect of which a member would be reimbursed, services which would be voucherable and accountable. Of course, limits would have to be placed on the amount which could be paid to any member, but money would be made available in order that members could be more effective, offer greater services to their constituents and be more available to them. Action along these lines would, I believe, receive general support from hon. member on all sides, besides removing much of the public opposition to this legislation.

Second, I urge that the standing committee studying this bill should give thought to recommending a method for dealing with changes in the salaries and allowances of Parliamentarians in the future. The Beaupré committee was silent on this aspect and the government has not made any recommendation. I believe a committee of the House, while studying Bill C-242, might give a good deal of thought to this question and make recommendations which the government would then have ample opportunity to study before it arose again. One of the difficulties which succeeding government have faced is that, since no one wants to tackle the problem of parliamentary increases, it is always left for a number of years. A substantial amount is then involved and there is always a reaction from the public. It would be much better if indemnities were tied to some objective criteria so that they could be dealt with on an annual or biennial basis. It would not then be necessary for us to conduct this agonizing and embarrassing appraisal of our own work. If