

Members Salaries

contract to play baseball, to throw a ball at somebody holding a bat! That is baseball. In football, players are well paid, and I do not object to that—

An hon. Member: They kick off—

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): The Prime Minister knows that well, because he was asked to kick off three or four times in the last four or five years. Football players are well paid, I do not object to that. As I said a moment ago, reporters do not object either. It is a sign of great quality, of sanctifying grace when a hockey, football or baseball player gets a big salary. Reporters say: "What a good player, he earns that much!" Why do they not say the same for members of parliament who, I repeat, do not spend their time entertaining only three or four hundred thousand people, but are responsible before 22 million Canadians! That is a real responsibility! Seriously, Mr. Speaker, I said we had to attract young people. I am making comparisons. I do not want to compare members of parliament to sports players, but if we accept to see sports players get such salaries, why do we not accept that members of parliament, who have duties, also have rights? Once duties are duly accepted and understood, they deserve adequate payment. Which does not mean they should roll in money. Besides, newspapermen convey the impression in their articles that when we get a higher pension or allowance the money gets directly into our pockets, and we do not have to pay anything out of it. Mr. Speaker, why do those journalists up in the gallery not say that most members of parliament have to maintain two residences, one in Ottawa and one in their own riding, and incur twice the expenses while they pay income tax like anybody else?

Last year my pension plan cost me \$3,000 or more and I paid about \$7,000 in taxes; in other words I had to pay close to \$11,000 out of my \$24,000. How much is left? \$13,000. That is less than any journalist sitting in the gallery earns! But that does not count. We get everything free. People tell us: "You'll get a large pension". But we pay accordingly. Tell me of any industry or business whose employees have to pay \$3,000 a year for their pension plan! That is what we in this House have to pay for our "big" pension plan.

● (1550)

[English]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): You pay only \$1,440 a year.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): I have some back tax to pay, and you know that. I am rich; I can pay. Perhaps you are too poor to have the big plan so you have the smaller one.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Does the hon. member think that it is fair arithmetic to count what he pays for back years against income in the current year?

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): I do not know, but I have to pay for it anyway. Whether it is for 1946, 1967 or 1976, I do not care; but I know I pay for it.

[Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue).]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Not \$3,000 a year.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Not far from it. And the income tax we pay, do you agree with that? The difference that is left to us is less than the amount left to the newspapermen in the press gallery.

An hon. Member: They pay the same income tax.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): We pay as much as they do.

An hon. Member: We make more money.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): And we pay for it; that is the point. They think that members of parliament do not pay a dime out of their income. The reporters present the whole thing as if we were paid 100 per cent and we did not have to disburse anything.

An hon. Member: When did you start listening to reporters?

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): I am starting now.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, other Canadian citizens have huge revenues, but newspapermen have no objection to that. I spoke of union leaders earlier. Let us now turn to doctors and lawyers. Some doctors in Ontario earn \$200,000 a year, according to data compiled and published by the provincial NDP member in Toronto, himself a doctor. Mr. Speaker, journalists do not object to that. Neither do we. But when it comes to members of parliament, people say: members of parliament do not deserve that much, they are not responsible people.

I maintain that we are responsible for a whole nation. Whether we belong to the Liberal, Progressive Conservative, New Democratic or Social Credit party, we have a number of rights and duties with respect to Canada as a whole. We work to preserve the rights of our fellow citizens and we remind them of their duties as Canadian citizens. And I will say to journalists that they too have rights and duties with respect to their fellow citizens. Let them respect their duties and we shall respect their rights.

● (1600)

[English]

Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I suppose no member of parliament is likely to earn the undying favour of the public by speaking in favour of this bill, but the fact is that the bill as it is now before us, and with possible future modifications, is not only one which would provide justice to hon. members of this House and the other place but it is also a bill which would safeguard the public interest. I do not even need to speak about the public interest in ensuring that those who serve the public on a full-time basis in parliament are paid justly, the same as everyone else in society should be, but I speak primarily of the fact that there is a public interest in helping hon. members to resolve the conflict of interest situation with respect to their own remuneration in which they have found themselves since the beginning of our country. This