

Members' Salaries

history of this bill, its introduction, and the manner in which it has been proceeded with through its various stages, reminds one of a tiger. Well, we still have that tiger by the tail. Maybe parliamentarians deserve a salary increase—maybe. But I suggest to you that from the beginning, the wrong road was followed, the wrong path taken. An independent body should have been set up long ago to consider salaries and allowances to which parliamentarians ought to be entitled.

The odd thing about this bill is that possibly parliament has spent more time considering this matter in the present session, since September 30 last, than it has spent considering most other important pieces of legislation which come before the House.

Mr. Sharp: That is not so.

Mr. Jones: Where are our priorities? I detect just a bit of selfishness on the part of parliamentarians—just a bit. I don't like it, and citizens generally do not like it.

Furthermore, parliamentarians should realize—I suppose they all know this now—that if this bill becomes law they will move into a higher tax bracket, and a good portion of that so-called increase will be retained by the government, or returned to treasury coffers, to be spent and wasted by the government in some other form. That rule applies to members just as it applies to ordinary taxpayers and wage earners.

Being a member from the Atlantic provinces I find it difficult to understand why the government adopts a policy of regional disparity in its payment of wages for federal government employees across this country but does not adopt that policy with members. The government has presented a bill providing for increased salaries and allowances; the bill practises regional disparity in reverse. Actually, earlier today a maritime member asked a question on this same point.

An hon. Member: That was the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. Hogan).

Mr. Jones: I am told the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond asked the question. In all good conscience I cannot support a pay increase in any way. I look at the attitude adopted—

An hon. Member: Don't take it.

Mr. Jones: Stand up when your turn comes, sir. I might inform the hon. member that my income tax is greater than the salary I am paid in this place.

An hon. Member: But you are an Independent.

Mr. Jones: If the hon. member wants my job and wants to run as an Independent, he is welcome.

The evidence is clear. In a democracy it is incumbent on a government to consider others. Consider, for example, the attitude toward those on fixed incomes. I am talking about people like CNR employees in the Atlantic region and other regions of Canada, and other pensioners. They, generally, are also looking for benefits. I must be guided by the collective majority conscience of the constituents of Moncton. They do not favour a pay increase for parliamen-

[Mr. Jones.]

tarians at this time. I suggest that all members of parliament should, in all conscience, be guided in the same manner.

Members were elected to this House on July 8 last. At that time, or even before then, they ought to have known what the salary, allowances, and other benefits would be. This bill has created, yes, and increased cynicism and distrust. There is increasing disrespect on the part of the public and the citizenry for parliament. I think this House would be well advised to give this bill a complete hoist. Let us establish an independent body now to consider this matter, and let us get on with the important business facing this country. Let us set an example with our restraint, and show a sense of stability at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Is the House ready for the question? The question is on motion No. 4. All those in favour of the said motion will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Pursuant to section 11 of Standing Order 75, the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred.

The House will now consider together motion No. 5, standing in the name of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), and motion No. 6, standing in the name of the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent). First we will take motion No. 5.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre), seconded by Mr. Peters moves:

That Bill C-44, an act to amend the Senate and House of Commons Act, the Salaries Act and the Parliamentary Secretaries Act, be amended in sub-clause (1) of Clause 4(a) by deleting from lines 45 and 46 on page 4 the words "five thousand three hundred dollars" and by substituting therefor the words "two thousand dollars"; and (b) by deleting from lines 14 and 15 on page 5 the words "ten thousand six hundred dollars" and by substituting therefor the words "eight thousand dollars".

Next I will put motion No. 6.

Mr. Broadbent, seconded by Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre) moves:

That Bill C-44, an act to amend the Senate and House of Commons Act, the Salaries Act and the Parliamentary Secretaries Act, be amended by deleting sub-clause (1) from Clause 4 being lines 41 to 48 at page 4 and lines 1 to 18 at page 5 of the Bill.

● (2010)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, these two motions, Nos. 5 and 6, are being debated at one time as directed by the Chair. Both relate to the question of the tax free expense allowances provided to members of the Senate and the House of Commons.