

Salaries Act

the measure. I do not think voting against the measure will be interpreted in the country as voting against it because a commission has not been set up; it will be interpreted as indicating that the official opposition is against these increases.

The leader of the C.C.F. group has said that he is voting against the measure because he thinks the amounts stated in it are too high. If that is the conviction held by the C.C.F. group, then of course it is a reasonable one.

Speaking some time ago, the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), making special reference to himself, said that these increases were not being asked particularly for the benefit of this cabinet, but rather for the positions represented in the cabinet, so that the benefit would accrue to incoming governments as well as to this one. I think that is a reasonable position, and that he was speaking reasonably when he said that he was not going to be here too long. He is getting on in years, and when he asks for the passage of this bill I am quite certain he is not asking that it be passed for his own benefit. I do not know what his financial status is, but I suppose he would be able to get along for the rest of his life with what he has at the present time.

So what he is asking for is something that will be permanent for the future, something that will be available to those persons who will step into the shoes of those who are now carrying the responsibility of government. I think that is reasonable. We have not discussed the amounts particularly, as to whether they are too high or too low. However, in my own personal view, I am not opposed to the bill.

Mr. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to indulge in anything in the nature of sentimental discussion. I do believe, however, that the introduction of this measure at this time—and I cannot refer to the other one because it has been passed by parliament—is inopportune and inappropriate, in view of conditions both national and international.

Legislation such as this, introduced so soon after a general election campaign in which, at no time, was there any suggestion of this type of legislation being introduced, endangers the institution of parliament, and places democracy in our country in a position where we, in parliament, may well be pricing regard for parliament out of the free market of public opinion.

Mention was made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) of the appropriateness of having matters such as this referred to a committee of the house. I think that view

has been reinforced in recent days by similar action in the British parliament. There a committee on members' indemnities was set up, representative of all members who, having heard evidence and having considered the situation from every angle and facet, made certain recommendations. I feel that a similar course should have been followed in connection with this legislation. A committee would have reviewed the situation and would have given consideration to the appropriateness of increases being made applicable to all ministers in the cabinet. There are certain portfolios to which the remarks of the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) are inappropriate. In Great Britain there is a realization that heavy responsibilities rest upon certain ministers, including the Prime Minister, and that equal responsibilities do not rest upon ministers in other portfolios. Furthermore, even though we favour one or more increases under this bill, we are placed in the position of having to vote for the entire bill. That anomaly would have been obviated by the simple expedient of a committee being set up to review the whole problem of indemnities.

I cannot rid myself of the thought that members of this House of Commons would not have given the same expeditious consideration to this legislation had it been introduced in March or April last, in advance of the general election. And I believe this, too, that when legislation such as this has not been considered in any way by the Canadian people, and adopted by them, and when they have not been given an opportunity to consider whether or not they would have supported it, it is a travesty of parliament to bring it in immediately after a general election.

This is the kind of thing that undermines public regard for democratic institutions. I intend to vote against the bill, as I voted against an earlier measure. Public opinion in Canada is strongly adverse to this legislation. People are asking for a higher standard in parliament. Additional monetary rewards will not necessarily furnish higher standards. When I look back to a time 50 or 75 years ago and see the giants of that day who served without remuneration, and see some of the giants in—

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): Not in this parliament?

Mr. Diefenbaker: No, not in this parliament. When I look at the cabinet today I feel—I am sure hon. members will agree with me—that neither the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) nor the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) is here because of the rewards measured in terms of money. They