

Oral Questions

Mr. Lalonde:—Madam Speaker, the Hon. Members have not taken the trouble—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

AMOUNT OF AVERAGE SALARY INCREASE

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. When inflation was on the rise in this country we were told it was due to world conditions, but with inflation coming down it is solely the Government's responsibility. Perhaps the Minister of Finance could answer a very simple question. Does he agree that average salaries in the National Capital Commission for 1984 will indeed be approximately 18 per cent above those in 1983?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): 1984?

Mr. Stevens: Fiscal year 1984.

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, first of all I have to remind the Hon. Member that when inflation was high in this country he blamed the Government for it all. Now he wants to turn around and say it has come down, but no thanks to the Government. Again, he should make up his mind. Either we were to blame for inflation before, as he blames us for it, or not. But he cannot have it both ways.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lalonde: As far as the NCC is concerned, Madam Speaker, I do not have the figures at hand but I can tell the Hon. Member quite clearly that Parliament has passed a law, and the salaries of federal public servants are allowed to increase only by 6 per cent and 5 per cent when they are doing the same job, and this takes place as the collective agreements expire. I would ask my hon. friend therefore to check further into the matter.

MONITORING OF SALARY INCREASES

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, would the Minister indicate to the House what guidelines have been given by his Department to ensure that, Department by Department, there are not little wrinkles to get around the guidelines through promotions and other such devices? Secondly, would he indicate what monitoring will continue to ensure that indeed these excessive average salary increases we are now witnessing in the Public Service do not continue?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, as a former President of the Treasury Board the Hon. Member should know these matters are under the authority of the Treasury Board, not that of the Minister of Finance. But I can tell him without hesitation the Government has been very

careful to make sure the law passed by this Parliament is being implemented and increases are not going to be more than 6 per cent and 5 per cent. That is the rule which is being applied. Obviously there are promotions, and changes in the situation of a particular individual, as I indicated before in the case of the Hon. Member for Yukon who changed jobs and also changed salaries.

I can assure the Hon. Member that the Treasury Board is exercising very strict control over this issue, and I think his comments about the Public Service are quite unfair and inappropriate.

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance will be changing jobs and changing salaries shortly, too.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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GOVERNMENT RESTRAINT PROGRAM

TAXING OF CABLE COMMUNICATIONS SUBSCRIBERS

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Madam Speaker, I want to put a question to the Minister of Finance with regard to his budget. In view of the fact that cable companies under the government's 6 and 5 program have already been allowed to increase fees to their subscribers, how does he justify slapping a new tax on cable subscribers? Does six and five mean 6 plus 5?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am very interested in hearing that my hon. friend is promoting me to another, more elevated position, I suppose.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: I want to tell him that I will not go after him for support or as an organizer.

As far as the tax is concerned, the Hon. Member knows that in the budget I announced a 6 per cent tax on cable subscribers. That tax has been justified on the basis that we needed to establish a fund to provide for Canadian broadcasting production. Part of that tax is going to be used to fulfil that particular objective. I hope my friend supports this because we have come out with a clear policy of encouraging Canadian broadcasting production, and that requires public funds. Indeed, if cable subscribers are going to benefit from the programming, they should be called upon to contribute to the cost of production.

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, it is not for me to tell the Minister where to go; the Canadian people will be doing that shortly.