

*Senate and House of Commons Act*

am sure that most members of the House will agree with me—that after one has travelled a certain amount one does not look upon travelling in the same way as others. A saturation point is reached with respect to travelling and thereafter it is not the same enjoyable, thrilling experience that some may believe it to be. To be constantly on the go and constantly travelling away from home and one's place of regular work is not good.

It must be pointed out, as others in this debate have pointed out, that of necessity a Member of Parliament incurs many unusual expenses, some of which are difficult adequately to define if one attempts to relate them to any ordinary expense account structure. As some hon. members have said, the Member of Parliament incurs expenses which he would not incur if he were not a member, and some of them certainly do not fit the standard format of accountable expenses. This still leaves the point that there are certain accountable expenses which should be taken into account and given further consideration if we are to develop an adequate structure for the remuneration of Members of Parliament.

In looking at the entire picture of the peculiar circumstances of Members of Parliament, and considering at the same time just what sort of job they are doing, whom they are representing and whose money they are spending, we must give consideration to maintaining a balance between the very real financial needs of the member on the one hand and the member's relationships with the people of his constituency and the people of Canada on the other. This is a matter that must be kept in mind at all times.

• (3:40 p.m.)

I have a particular point of view on this matter. Some members will undoubtedly disagree with my approach. That is their right and privilege and I respect them for their differences of opinion. I ask them to respect me for my views and to acknowledge that we have a very difficult task to perform. In fact, we need to do more work before we arrive at a satisfactory solution to this problem. This is a degrading process which Parliament has to go through at intervals. I suggest that the process we are now going through, and have gone through on a number of occasions in the past 25 years, hurts and degrades Parliament and its members. Members of this chamber are placed in the very awkward position of attempting to deal with this matter in an objective and sensible fashion.

Members of Parliament should be completely dispassionate in dealing with this matter, no matter whether at some point they must assume responsibility for whatever decision is taken. It is clear that we need a different procedure than we have had up to now. This is one of the matters that the Beaupré committee was asked to study—and it struck out completely! The biggest single failing in the report of the Beaupré committee is that it does not make any suggestions or proposals for dealing with this matter in the future. In fact, the committee passed the buck on this issue and declined to make a concrete proposal. As such, they failed in part to accept

[Mr. Burton.]

the responsibility that was given to them when the committee was established.

I have reservations with regard to some of the suggestions that the salary or indemnity of members of Parliament should be related to a particular level of salary in the public service. It is difficult, if not impossible, to adequately relate the role and job of a Member of Parliament to any particular position in the public service. They are entirely different types of jobs.

I take some objection to the procedure followed by the Prime Minister when he made his announcement in the House of Commons at the beginning of the week. He said this is what the government is proposing to Members of Parliament. He then went on to outline government proposals with respect to a number of categories in the executive level of the public service. He did not attempt to establish any relationship between these two groups, but he made the announcement at the same time as though he were lumping together civil servants and Members of Parliament. This carries implications which should be questioned by Members of Parliament and examined very carefully before we go too far down the road of linking the indemnity of a Member of Parliament with a position in the public service.

As I have already noted, there is a very real need to take further account of some of the expenses, particularly those of an accountable nature, which are or may be incurred by a member in carrying out his duties, and also to ensure that more adequate services are available to Members of Parliament. What is the present situation? We have the report of the Beaupré committee which made a number of recommendations. In spite of the fact that the Prime Minister thanked the Beaupré committee very profusely for the work it carried out in preparing its recommendations, the government essentially rejected the recommendations and approach of that committee. It was a mistake to take that sort of approach.

Some aspects of the Beaupré committee recommendations merit consideration and should be further considered. Reference was made in the Beaupré committee report to the necessity or desirability of improvements in travel arrangements for members and their spouses. Generally, I find these proposals acceptable. I think they would be helpful. They do not involve a direct payment to members and their spouses; they would make more facilities and services available to them.

It should be noted on the record, for the benefit of those who look with envy on the travel-free arrangement for members, that under this arrangement not one cent passes through the hands of a member unless it involves reimbursement for car travel, for which an expense claim is submitted. For the most part, especially with respect to economy air travel which is available to us, travelling is done entirely by voucher. It does not involve funds passing through our hands directly, although these funds are legitimately charged against the name of each member of the House. It should also be noted that although such travel arrangements are available to members, members must of necessity incur more expense than they would otherwise incur. When I go to Regina