

lowest possible cost, at the same time remembering that veterans should have the first opportunity to get jobs in this house.

Mr. STEWART (Winnipeg North): I should like to inform Your Honour that there has never been any complaint, at any time, as to the nature of the service. I think we are all agreed that the service we get from the employees of this house is excellent. To some extent I accept the assurance of Mr. Speaker, but I wish to remind the government that assurances of employment do not fill babies' milk bottles, and I should like to know from the Minister of Veterans Affairs specifically what plans he has in view to give work to these ex-service men who are to be laid off from the service of this house when it prorogues, or during the Easter recess.

Mr. McILRAITH: I might add something on this subject which would be helpful to hon. members. It seems to me there is a little misapprehension about the pay being received. The actual pay of the cleaning staff in the House of Commons now works out at about \$138 a month. The way it is computed is by taking \$4 a day for each day of the week, for the year round, if they are on a yearly basis, or during the whole of the session if they are on a sessional basis, plus a bonus. It works out at a more substantial item than would be indicated in the remarks of the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

There is one further point which in my view should be drawn to the attention of hon. members, namely, that it has been the practice, when there have been short recesses, such as we have at Easter, that these employees are kept on. They are not laid off for that short time.

One other point which ought fairly to be presented to hon. members is that it has been the practice that when sessional employees are hired, particular care has been taken to point out to them that they are hired only as sessional employees. I have not heard of any misunderstanding having arisen on the part of an employee, as far as that point is concerned.

I offer these observations in the hope that they may serve to give a better understanding of the problem.

Mrs. STRUM: In this connection I should like to refer to the pay received by people working in the restaurant. Last year I served on a subcommittee on wages, of the committee dealing with the restaurant service. I tried hard to bring about an increase in the pay of the lower-salaried people. I found there were great numbers of people whom hon. members using the restaurant do not see and who, as a result, do not receive tips.

There are those who wash the dishes and the girls who carry the trays. All these have been receiving less than \$2 a day or \$50 a month. They get some meals, it is true. But anyone who goes out and looks for a room in Ottawa these days knows one cannot begin to pay rent and buy clothing for that amount.

We have no right to expect the parents of these girls to subsidize the government of Canada. It is no excuse to say that they live at home, and that the old man pays the rent. We have no right to chisel on the parents of those girls, nor have we any right to take them on and force them to accept such low wages.

Some of the attitudes I discovered respecting this matter of wage scales came as a great surprise to me. I tried hard to get a \$10 raise for those who were receiving only \$50. I find that if one is getting \$200 it is an insult to offer an increase of anything less than \$25. However, if one is getting only \$50 a month, he should be satisfied to get only \$5 a month more. I say that \$5 on \$50 as compared with \$25 on \$200 does not make sense to me.

We must remember that these people, who are valuable to us, are providing an essential service. If you and I do not eat, we cannot work. Food is a basic essential, and those who are engaged in handling it are important. We should be more concerned with the lower-paid employees in the government service. People should not be expected to go through a ten-year period of service, during which time they have had to meet rising living costs, and to get no adjustment in their wages. I would hope, therefore, that this appropriation is broad enough to give increased pay to these lower-paid workers.

Mr. GLEN: I should like to reply to the hon. member for Winnipeg North. During my term as Speaker of the House of Commons we had occasion to revise the salaries of the constables in the house. A committee was appointed, and we saw the civil service commission. The Clerk of the House and I dealt with the commission in the discussions respecting the salaries of the constables. I believe this was done in answer to a request by the then leader of the opposition, the present hon. member for Peel.

We gave increases to the staff, and I believe they were satisfied that they were being properly dealt with. However, many of the constables had left for service overseas, and their positions were being retained for them by some who were serving only on a temporary basis.