

Members' Salaries

hoping the government would address itself to the matter. After all, in all probability it will be three and a half years before another parliament takes over and this is a suitable time at which to set up alternative machinery.

A number of provinces have set up committees headed by their Chief Justices and these committees have brought back recommendations to the legislatures concerned, recommendations which have been adopted. We made a start in this House when the government appointed the Beaupré commission. That commission made some useful recommendations. The government disregarded some of the best of them, though, and so we are back to the old system with members finding themselves in the embarrassing and humiliating position of having to decide how much they are worth—having to set their own salaries and expense allowances.

I submit we ought now to address ourselves to the question of finding a better way. This is why I believe the NDP served a useful purpose in December by asking that this matter be held over, and why I believe we are serving a useful purpose now in not allowing this legislation to be hurried through today. I do not believe the government has addressed itself to the primary problem, namely, what type of mechanism can be established so that in the future we shall not have this task of deciding what remuneration members should get.

The proposals in this bill are far in excess of what we have a right to vote ourselves at this time.

An hon. Member: You are not worth any more.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): The hon. member across the way says I am not worth any more. I would say this to him: he could not live on what he is worth if that is all they paid him!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): When we ran for office on July 8 last, every candidate who offered herself or himself for election knew exactly what the remuneration was, and none of us was forced to run. All of us were anxious to enter this chamber as members of parliament. We undertook to do this job, and we knew what we were to be paid for doing it. It is surely unbecoming that one of the first things we do when we get to the House is to boost our own salaries.

It is true that what we did not know on July 8, 1974, was what the cost of living was going to be during the thirtieth parliament. I think members would be perfectly justified in attaching a cost of living index to the indemnity which is paid to them. But I do not think it has to be attached to the expense allowances. As has been pointed out, our expenses have in some respects gone down because the government has assumed responsibility for many of the expenditures which formerly had to be met out of our own pockets. Our constituency offices, telephone privileges, extended travel benefits, have all helped to ease the burden of meeting the expenses of being a member of parliament. Nevertheless, I think members are justified in saying that with the cost of living rising year after year, as a result of the government's failure to cope with inflation,

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

we are entitled to some increase each year to compensate for the rise in the cost of living.

The measure before us goes much farther. As it stands now, it proposes to raise the indemnity to some \$27,000 a year, and to raise the expense allowance to some \$12,000, making a total of \$39,000. The statement made by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) before Christmas indicated that the government would in all probability, when the bill was in committee, recommend changes which would cut the increased salary to \$24,000 with \$10,600 for expenses. Attached to this would be an escalator clause which would carry on from there.

I submit it is going to be very difficult, not only for the government but for members of parliament to go up and down this country asking people to restrain their demands for increased salaries to keep pace with the rising cost of living when we ourselves have given ourselves an increase of 33-1/3 per cent and tied that income to the industrial composite index. It will be extremely difficult for the government to explain to old age pensioners, veterans allowance recipients, retired civil servants, and those who have retired from the armed forces or the RCMP how we can afford to be so generous with ourselves and why we are so niggardly with those for whom we are responsible.

I call it ten o'clock, Madam Speaker.

● (2200)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

ENERGY—OIL—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION OF POSSIBLE FRAUDULENT INCREASE IN IMPORT PRICES

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, on Wednesday, March 19, I asked the following question:

Because of recent reports that authorities in the United States are investigating what may have been widespread actions by certain companies there to improperly and fraudulently increase the prices at which they imported oil into that country, will the minister cause investigations to be carried out here, to see whether there may have been similar improper schemes carried out in connection with the importation of oil into Canada?

In his reply the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) made reference to an examination of the books of the importing companies by departmental auditors, outside auditing firms and the Auditor General. In view of what press reports suggest was the scope of alleged improper pricing schemes for importing oil into the United States which are being investigated in that country, I thought the Canadian public would want to have more complete information than this from the government about what it has done, and is doing, to ensure that similar schemes have not been in existence here.

The federal government established a policy that there would be a single national price, one lower than the world