

Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act

She is quoted as going on to say:

—the amendment could allow lower-paid workers above-ceiling increases if others within their bargaining group accept lower raises.

Generally speaking, I am pleased that the hon. member has adopted a positive approach towards the amendments we have tabled. The provisions contained in this bill set limits, and within those limits employers and employees have the right to bargain and the government has the right to release them from the application of the law. But as I say, we will be addressing that particular amendment in due course.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me say that I urge all members of this House to support the overall thrust of this bill and to recognize the extent to which collective bargaining is being preserved and protected by the amendments which have been introduced.

● (1420)

In this group of amendments which we are presently considering is motion No. 3. I must say that it is with some regret that I have proposed this amendment, which was in response to repeated requests and admonishments from the Conservative Party, more particularly from the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker). Going back several weeks, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton said that ministerial staff should be singled out for a particular kind of treatment, which is discriminatory, because they alone, of all political appointees, would be subject to this kind of treatment. The treatment would have the effect of putting them under the program at a time when no other groups in comparable circumstances would go under the program.

I pointed out in this House and I pointed out in committee that ministerial staff received a wage rate increase—we do not know what individuals received—determined at 10 per cent in a decision of the Treasury Board on May 13. Their year runs from April 1 to March 31. They go into the six per cent and five per cent program, as the law is presently drafted, in the spring of next year, as every other group does. But the group with which they work and who are members of the parliamentary precinct in ministers' offices are, of course, parliamentary staff, also all political appointees, staff of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), staff of the Tory research bureau, staff of the NDP research bureau and the staff of Liberal Party research bureau.

Mr. Deans: We do not want you to do it, so don't include us in it.

Mr. Johnston: All of these people are part of this major component. The latter group received a wage increase of 11 per cent. I did not hear the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton say much about that. Nevertheless, when questioned on that subject with respect to an amendment proposed by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton before the committee earlier this week, I said that I would be prepared to look at a fair amendment, fair in the sense that it would treat everybody in the same circumstances the same way.

Mr. Deans: This is not fair, Don.

Mr. Johnston: This amendment has been put forward to treat everybody in the same circumstances in the same way. Unfortunately, that way will require a rollback to 6 per cent for that entire group of employees, in the same manner that Members of Parliament, ministers and senators have, in effect, been rolled back.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Johnston: If the proposed amendment is adopted, it will come into effect at the time this bill receives assent. Political appointees under this amendment will be treated the same way. It is not only the logical extension of the argument put forward by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton—

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): It is worse if you know what you are saying.

Mr. Johnston:—it is a necessary corollary of what the hon. member has put forward.

I also take this opportunity to inform the House that there have been consultations among the representatives of the parties and that it has not been possible to reach any agreement under the provisions at the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-124, an act respecting compensation in the public sector of Canada.

Mr. Deans: It isn't any wonder. You keep changing the bill. It is not even the same bill that you brought in.

Mr. Johnston: Therefore, I wish to give notice, Mr. Speaker, that at the next sitting of the House I shall propose a motion, pursuant to Standing Order 75C, to allocate one sitting day to each of the said stages of the said bill.

Mr. Murphy: A holiday rush again.

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to the first matter in which my name was used in the House with respect to the authorship of motion No. 3. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my dear friend, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston), that I have heard cheap shots before and I have heard viciousness before, but when it is laced with untruthfulness it becomes intolerable.

I have to say to the minister that he had better read motion No. 3 again. When he reads motion No. 3 again he will find that what the government has done to the staff of Members of Parliament, who are employees of the House of Commons, is not to equate them with Members of Parliament; it is, in fact, to make their situation different and less, in quantitative terms, than that of Members of Parliament. I do not have the figures with me, but we have worked at those figures and I know that is true.

I want the House to know, I want the employees of the House to know and I want the public to know what the situation is. The position of this party has been, is and will be that the staff of Members of the House of Commons, and ministerial staff were to be treated equally with the public service, that