

Members Salaries

have, that the increase is too much and something different and better should be worked out, I think we have done a service to this country. It is not that the press alone did it, or that the press picked it up and inflamed the country with editorials: press editorials tried to inflame the country to vote Conservative in the last election, and look what happened! The public is angry, and whatever influence the press may have on public opinion is beside the point. It would be a mistake to think this is a fight between parliament and the press because it is more than that; it has become a fight between parliament and the people of this country for credibility.

As the leader of this party has said, and indeed all members of this party say, some kind of increase for MPs is necessary. What sort of increase should it be, and how should it be arrived at? It is not important whether it is tied to the industrial index, to the cost of living index or the consumer price index. What is important is the indexing itself and the basic unfairness of it. If you add 10 per cent to an old age pension, it represents something worth while to the pensioner although it may be only a dollar and some change. Add 10 per cent to an MP's salary and the increase represents more than the entire old age pension.

That is what is wrong with indexing, Mr. Speaker. It is regressive, whether it be the industrial index or the cost of living index, because it either maintains the gap between those who are well off and those who are not, or enlarges it. It makes the inequality of the situation worse than it was. If this parliament were concerned about removing the distance between those who have and those who do not have in this society, the award would have to be substantially less than the industrial index or the cost of living index.

That is the kind of decision this parliament should be taking, Mr. Speaker. I am surprised that the Conservative Party missed the opportunity of saying, "Now is the time to look at an incomes policy. Let us start with the incomes of members of parliament and establish some kind of guideline for our society about how incomes should be arranged". You remove the gap between the rich and the poor by giving more to those at the bottom and less to those at the top. For all the Conservative Party's talk about an incomes policy, there is not a word about it when it comes to their own salaries. If you are going to bring in an incomes policy—and I think sooner or later this country will come to that—whether it is a guidelines policy or a direct control policy, surely the place to start is with MPs salaries. It is not done by saying that everybody is getting outrageous salaries in our society, or some people are, and that MPs salaries have to match. That is not showing any kind of leadership.

While we concede that there is some substantial ground for increasing the present salary of MPs, what ground is there for increasing the expense allowance? The hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville criticized the statement made by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby at considerable length, saying that the benefits we now receive really should not be included. I will speak for myself on this matter, Mr. Speaker, but I do not think I am too different from many other members. Until a few years ago I paid for my own newsletters; admittedly not the full price, but I

[Mr. Saltsman.]

paid for them. I also paid for printing questionnaires, for extra help, for a telephone in my riding. The riding association paid the bulk of the constituency office expenses. I know many other members paid the same type of expenses from their salaries before we were given the expense allowance. But we did it because we thought it was an important way to serve our constituents.

The hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville also overlooked the fact that most of the contributions we make to a political party are now deductible for income tax purposes. In our party, that amounts to a substantial part of our income, Mr. Speaker. Personally, it saves me about \$1,000 a year and that is a substantial benefit. It may be that Liberals and Conservatives do not give anything to their parties or riding associations: perhaps they are paid. Members of the New Democratic Party, however, have always made contributions toward the work of the riding associations because it is of benefit to us. There are other benefits which I could indicate.

● (1650)

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member indicated he has a method of saving \$1,000 a year through income tax credits. I would love to know about this before he goes any further.

Mr. Saltsman: I appreciate the suggested correction, Mr. Speaker. It is not \$1,000; it is \$500 odd. It is, nevertheless, a very substantial saving.

Mr. Gilbert: It is \$500 for himself and \$500 for his wife.

Mr. Saltsman: There is one other matter I should like to deal with in the few minutes at my disposal, and that is the suggestion that if we do not pay large sums of money we will not get good men and women running for parliament. Surely that is a most self-evident piece of nonsense. This parliament is composed of many good men and women, but I do not think they are any better than those we had before when the salary was \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year. I am sure that if any of us wished to abdicate, or felt we could not possibly stand the onerous responsibility of continuing to be a member of parliament and retired from this place, there would be a great rush for our jobs even at the present salary. I am sure you could get somebody with my qualities, or someone perhaps better or worse, but the point is that there are many good men and women in the Parliament of Canada.

This job cannot be equated with other types of occupations. It is a very specialized kind of job and it must be obvious that in a nation of 22 million people, the 264 men and women are here to legislate on behalf of the people of this country. If any one of us wanted to get rich, there are many better ways than by becoming a member of parliament. If we wanted to live longer or have a better family life, there are much better ways than by being a member of parliament. When we accept the responsibility of a member of parliament, we know there will be certain associated problems. For example, we know we will not get rich; but we are entitled to a decent salary enabling us to live in a responsible sort of way.

I think we should get a little more than we are getting now, but we are not entitled to the moon and we should