

Supply—Privy Council

to parliament and to our parliamentary institutions, is surely to draw attention to any change in the emoluments of the ministers. Ministers are not like parliamentary assistants. It is the ministers who advise the crown, who determine these matters and who decide what they will recommend to parliament as what they shall get themselves. What they were doing here was recommending that they be paid an additional salary which was never drawn to the attention of parliament except by being printed in the further supplementary estimates No. 2 last year.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What were the terms that were so underhanded? Does the hon. gentleman have it?

Mr. Pickersgill: If the Prime Minister is objecting to the word "underhand" I shall withdraw it.

Mr. Diefenbaker: No, I do not, but I am interested in knowing how the terms failed in setting out full particulars.

Mr. Pickersgill: I believe I have the item.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Would the hon. gentleman read the terms and tell us how they concealed the facts?

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I shall be happy to read it. I believe the terms are precisely the same as in the item before us. I do not appear to be able to locate it on my desk, but in any event I believe it is in the same terms as the present item, and I admit the perfect legality of it. On that point there is no disagreement between the Prime Minister and me.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Chairman, may I ask the hon. gentleman this question. He admits the legality of it. Does he not also admit that in the supplementary estimate last fall it was stated that the additional amount was for salaries for ministers without portfolio?

Mr. Pickersgill: Oh, quite.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Pardon?

Mr. Pickersgill: There is no quarrel on that between us, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Then what did we conceal from you?

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps the Prime Minister would let me proceed to explain.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes, surely.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am sure the Prime Minister will agree that this is not a simple matter.

Mr. Diefenbaker: No.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am sure he will agree this is not an easy matter and it is not easy for a novice like me—

Mr. Ricard: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pickersgill: —to have to argue against so eminent a counsel as the Prime Minister.

Mr. Harkness: We know something of your simplicity, but don't emphasize the fact.

Mr. Pickersgill: As a matter of fact, sir, I believe there are more interesting things to talk about than me.

Mr. Harkness: I agree.

Mr. Pickersgill: I said and I repeat, sir, that I think this was an undesirable way of legislating, but it was a legal way of legislating and I never questioned that. I did say that Mr. Knowles had questioned this kind of legislation and I thought he had gone much too far. I also said I thought that in respect of remuneration for a minister of the crown it should not be handled in this fashion. Moreover, this committee or the committee of the previous parliament never discussed this item. The Prime Minister knows that. There was never any discussion of it. There was never a vote for the whole year. There were only fractions until January 31.

I objected to several things in principle. On one of these the Prime Minister has completely satisfied me; that is the point about the second governor general's warrant after April 1. If there was no payment after April 1 then my case on that point falls to the ground. I endeavoured to find that out from the Prime Minister before I began my speech, because I did not wish to waste the time of the committee on something that was not relevant, and his assurance since then satisfies me completely on that point.

But what was the most serious thing of all in my opinion was that on February 1 the previous parliament was dissolved without this item ever having been passed. Fractions of it were passed but the whole item was never passed. There was no legal basis for paying ministers without portfolio from February 1 on. There was no legal warrant, and parliament had done nothing to justify paying them after midnight on January 31. We had parliament dissolved, of course, in a fashion that might have been more difficult if Mr. King had not taken the stand he did in 1926. Since the Prime Minister referred to it, I refer to it. But in any case, as I say, I do not want—

Mr. Diefenbaker: I wish the hon. gentleman would—

Mr. Pickersgill: Oh, I am sure the Prime Minister does, and I am not going to respond