

of Parliament in this way and the timing will continue to be wrong in the future. In 1963 the action was taken at a time when the economy was on the upswing and unemployment was relatively low, or at least declining. Yet the increase was criticized by many of the same people who are questioning the present increase as being unwarranted and inappropriate. I agree that the timing is wrong. It will never be right; and it will never be right because there will never in my lifetime be a time when all the needs of the Canadian people will have been met, when every aspiration will have been realized, when every goal will have been reached in social and economic fields so that at that moment we could say: Now is the time, because everything is fixed up in every field and members should have a raise.

When I was speaking earlier I remembered a speech made by the late Clarence Gillis who spoke in favour of the pay increase of 1954. He said, in effect, "I have fought all my life to improve social security and to eliminate unemployment, and I continue to fight. I do not see that my efforts will be reduced if I now recommend that the salaries of Members of Parliament be increased."

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) took the view that it would be better to eliminate poverty entirely and it would be better to reduce unemployment or remove it altogether before taking action on this issue. I seriously suggest to him that this applies to every sector of the economy. Carried to its logical conclusion, a well-organized group of workers should not increase their own wages through collective bargaining and should not be permitted to do so under that prescription, unless those less fortunate and the weaker in the economy are brought up to their level. I do not foresee when it will be possible to totally reach our social goals making it possible to do something about members' salaries.

That places all of us in the unfortunate dilemma of admitting that everything is not 100 per cent in our society but that we are taking this action. I do not see much comfort, either, in the solution advanced that we should not decide on this question until after another election, that is, that we should do the job at the next Parliament. That suggestion has a certain attraction but one could question its validity. It would almost certainly make the question of members' indemnities a matter of partisan debate. It would certainly make the level of remuneration an election issue.

Do we want to make it an election issue? It would be bound to encourage candidates and prospective members, who were well-heeled, to offer themselves to the electorate at a lower rate of pay in the hope they would be elected instead of persons of modest means who needed all the income in order to carry out their responsibilities. Is this what we want? Is this our objective? Do we think this would improve the credibility or the image of Parliament? As was pointed out by the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland), if we pursued that possibility the government would probably state its future policy before the election.

Senate and House of Commons Act

• (9:30 p.m.)

In any event, the pay and allowances proposed in this bill, if carried, will be subject to the strictures of the electorate at the next election. We cannot escape that responsibility. They will know what has happened, and if they wish they will bring this government to task if they feel it has gone too far. Suppose, however, that the government did take a position and held it over until the next election. Members and candidates would be free to choose their own course in the election campaign, by the very nature of things.

If, by the way, the proposals were to take effect only after the electorate had passed judgment—a situation which does not often happen in our system because verdicts on legislation are usually given by the electorate *post facto*—under what circumstances is it to be concluded the proposals have been sanctioned by the voters? I wonder how one would determine that the proposals had been sanctioned by the voters. Would this be determined by the re-election of the government which proposed the increases and, if so, would it apply even though that government did not receive 50 per cent of the votes cast? If the majority of members—this is probably what would happen—of all parties spoke out against the increases during the campaign, would this mean that the increases would not take place even if the government which proposed the increases should be elected?

I see nothing but difficulty in this course of action. We can talk about a problem at the moment, or talk about a dilemma—but this is what we would bring about if we put this issue before the people in an election campaign. That is my personal opinion. I believe it is much better, in the interest of Parliament, to do the job now and take our responsibility as a government and as Members of Parliament. I have said the government is not selling this legislation to anybody. We do not think we have much to gain politically by bringing in this legislation. There are a few politicians on this side of the House as on the other side, and they know there is not much to gain. But we do it because—

An hon. Member: It is a matter of principle?

Mr. MacEachen: No. We do it because, as the hon. member for Selkirk said, there are members in this House who are suffering severe hardship. That is our difficulty. The hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) has stated in somewhat similar terms the difficulties faced by members of the House of Commons. That is why the government is bringing in this measure. We have been told by our supporters what their difficulties are, and we have been told by members in other parts of the House what their difficulties are. It was only after we had heard that and after we had appointed an independent committee that we decided to bring in this measure.

Remember that before we had the committee we thought everything would be a lot easier if an independent body recommended what we ought to do. We said that if an outside body looked at us and told us what to