

the public sector and Crown corporations. On occasion we try to find out what the compensation in certain activities paid for by the public happens to be. It is difficult to get that information. Too often the responses are very much like that made by Senator Marchand when he was minister of transport. When asked on the order paper to provide to members of parliament the levels of compensation for senior officers in Air Canada, the reply was that it was not in the interest of the corporation to make that information available, that it would be competitively difficult because the private sector did not make such information available, and it would be bad for morale. The shareholders of that corporation are the people of Canada and yet they are not given this information.

When Air Canada's major competitor, CP Air, decided to do some financing in the United States, it was forced by the SEC to make that information available and it did so. Why should the people of Canada not know what the compensation is in this corporation and in fact all agencies in which they are the major shareholders? If my proposal were adopted, the people of Canada would know what the compensation is for a large number of people who work for them.

Fifth, such a measure would help to redress some of the imbalance which has developed between the legislative arm of the government and the administrative arm. Politicians constantly hear that the government is really run by the public service. We are asked why politicians do not have more control over the public service.

If a situation develops where the deputy minister is paid more than the minister, what can one expect? Who in the eyes of the people of this country is worth more in the service to this country, the deputy minister who is paid more, or the minister? Presumably it is the deputy minister. While this is not a significant factor, the imbalance needs to be redressed. We need some way to ensure that the legislative element is in control. One of the ways this can be looked at is through the compensation system.

I am sure most members know that in the United States a system limiting compensation has been in effect for many years. In fact, it has been in effect throughout the history of that nation. There have been many studies, and suggestions that it is very difficult in that country to get the type of public servants that are needed, but the system prevails.

Under the administration of President Ford and the administration of President Carter, changes have been made in the compensation to senior executives in the public service, but in no case have they been made in such a way that public servants are paid more than the elected representatives. There is no one in the United States public service who earns more than the senior elected officials in the United States. There are very few people in the public service of the United States who earn more than cabinet ministers.

To give some idea of the way in which the situation has got out of balance, at the present time a deputy minister in Canada can earn over 18 per cent more than a senior under-secretary in the government of the United States. There may be very good and just reasons why senior public servants in this

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country should be compensated substantially higher than public servants in the United States.

I want to be very clear that I am not arguing or suggesting that our public servants are necessarily over-compensated. What I am arguing and suggesting is that we do not have in place in this country a built-in way of keeping sound control over the payment of senior public servants and that our system needs it. I would argue that the appointment of ad hoc committees to try and bring in studies of comparability with regard to compensation is not as satisfactory as built-in control.

If we are concerned about restraint and a proper balance between the legislative and administration function in the nation and a proper utilization of the resources of this country, what better way to start than by putting in a built-in check on the use of the taxpayers' money and that no legislating employee of the government or any of its agencies may be paid more than the Prime Minister of Canada? What a sensible solution! What a sensible way!

● (1712)

I am not arguing in favour of an increase in pay for legislators; I am arguing that under the present system there should be some sort of built-in control, some built-in guideline, so that we might know where we are going. How foolish it is to have a system under which deputy ministers are paid more than ministers. What kind of a system is that? We in this country badly need controls built in in the way in which compensation is paid to employees of the public service. We need controls built in to the whole system of expenditure in this country. I am arguing that the government give serious consideration to passing legislation limiting the amount which any public servant, any employee of any agency of the government, can receive. They will not be permitted to earn more than the Prime Minister of Canada gets. I can think of nothing which would do more, symbolically, to improve the legislative posture in this nation and I urge every member here to support this motion.

Mr. Donald J. Johnston (Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I found this motion interesting and in some respects unusual, coming, as it does, from the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies). I do not discard it out of hand because I think there is much merit to some of the points he has made, but I believe the mischief he is trying to correct would not be affected by the adoption of the motion he proposes.

We are considering a motion which essentially excludes the marketplace; it curtails the right of the individual who offers his services to a Crown corporation in an executive capacity to negotiate a level of remuneration which he might expect to receive in the private sector. Under its terms, no man or woman could be hired by the government or by one of its agencies at a higher salary than that paid to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I suggest this would place a government in an untenable position and make it impossible to obtain people with the competence we require in, for example, Crown corporations which play an increasingly important role in this