

Salaries Act

There is certainly nothing personal in my remarks. The ministers will know that there is absolutely nothing personal in these arguments. I do not know whether I dare suggest that perhaps we in the opposition, who look into the eyes of the cabinet ministers over there, know more about them than they do themselves. We do see signs of ability. Of course there are many able men in the cabinet, but I suggest that some of those who sit in the seats of the mighty have been endowed, like the rest of us, with feet of clay.

In view of the fact that no announcement was made about the introduction of this legislation before the election and that it was brought in afterwards, I suggest that the people of the country generally will not only resent that but will also think that the amounts provided in the bill as introduced are too large. I shall oppose the bill.

Mr. J. M. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word or two. I do not find it easy to vote against this measure, and I should like to explain briefly why I shall do so. I agree with what has been said by my leader as to the onerous duties discharged by members of the cabinet. Nobody would doubt that for a moment. The nature of my complaint is the same as my complaint about the other measure, that we were not consulted and that we had no means of arriving at a conclusion. I think we are still in that position.

The hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell) said we did not need to have any outside discussion or to have a committee, because we were the people who had to make the decision. Yes, we are; nevertheless I think we should make a decision only after adequate information is given to us. The shareholders of a company would not readily increase the salaries of their executive officers without having some idea as to comparable conditions elsewhere.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): The shareholders of a company would not have any competent officers at these salaries.

Mr. Macdonnell: I defer to the right hon. gentleman's knowledge.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): You know that as well as I do. What was your salary when you occupied such a position?

Mr. Macdonnell: The only argument that has been made so far as I know is a comparison of the remuneration of members of the cabinet with that of business executives. I do not accept that as a comparison at all. As my leader said, there are men in

the cabinet who could earn far more money outside, and it will be a poor day for the House of Commons when that is not true.

Why are these men here? In this respect I should like to refer to what the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) said after the 1949 election. He referred to the cabinet and their responsibility and honour. That is quite right. What better reason could there be for a man being here than that he wishes to serve the public, and what is more just than that he should receive honour for doing so?

That is why I say I do not believe the best men who come here come with any idea of comparing what they are going to get with what they have been getting before. Therefore I repudiate that argument, and that being the only argument we have been given, so far as I know, we are being asked to vote blindly and mechanically without proper consideration and proper information. Therefore I shall vote against this measure.

Mr. Angus MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): I want to say a few words in order to put myself on record as being opposed to these increases in the salaries of cabinet ministers. What I am about to say does not apply to the increase in the salary of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent). It has been said that the amount is necessary to maintain the dignity of his office. I have heard it put in that way. Personally, I do not think there is very much connection between money and dignity. I am quite sure the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) would maintain the dignity of his office without any increase in salary. He was dignified before he came here, and he has maintained his dignity while here despite the very undignified actions of some of his followers on some occasions.

I would emphasize what some of the members of this party who have spoken before have said. I think that a \$9,000 increase at one jump is too much. The average person is not going to separate the indemnity from the salary and say that a minister is only getting an increase of \$4,000 as a member of parliament and that has no relationship to the \$5,000 he gets as a cabinet minister. In so far as the average person is concerned, it is an increase of \$9,000.

I should like to draw the attention of the house to the fact that there have been additions to the cabinet in recent years, possibly in recent months, before any increase in indemnity was proposed. I do not believe that there was any force used to bring those young men into the cabinet. I am quite satisfied that they thought they were doing