

Judges Act

it is wrong for parliamentarians. It is the same in broadcasting stations.

I am sorry if I have been tempted to vent some spleen this afternoon, using as a vehicle a bill to which I give full approval, and I apologize to hon. members for having taken overly long. However, I did not say anything on the other bills, nor during previous stages of the bill before us.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Order!

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, it is often true in this House that we can differ widely on an issue that comes before us and yet find some measure of common ground. At least it is usually the case that we can understand each other despite wide differences of opinion which may exist. I am afraid, however, that on this issue, as between many of my hon. friends in the chamber and some of us in this quarter, it is awfully hard to understand each other. The gulf between us is too wide.

I comprehend what the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) and the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) are saying. They believe in those at the top getting percentage increases that correspond to the percentage increases that others have had. Thus they believe that those at the top should get more. I just do not share that point of view, Madam Speaker.

I believe it is the job of government and parliament to try to get rid of the inequalities in this country and to concentrate on raising the incomes of those in the middle and lower brackets. We do not move in that direction when we add substantial increments to the salaries of those who are already in the top 10, 5 or 3 per cent of our wage or salary earners.

● (1550)

It is not my intention to prolong this debate. Apparently I shouted "nay" so loudly a while back in an effort to drown out the "yeas" on that Senate bill that I did something to my voice which will protect members from a long speech from me at this time. I have also got to save my voice a bit because in a few minutes we will be dealing with a motion of mine calling for an increase in the old age pension.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): What will happen to that motion?

Mr. McKenzie: I will support it, Stanley.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend from Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. McKenzie) says he will support it. I expect lots of members will support it. In fact they will speak about it so long that they will talk it out.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): You have not the right to increase the pension anyway.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We have here an interesting contrast. Our judges are getting these high salaries, and my hon. friend from Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) slopped over into a rehashing of Bill C-44. Others are getting high salaries. A spirited defence is made for them that they should get these massive increases. I just do not agree. I think that this should not be our first concern, and I again make the point that I have tried to make in debates like this on other occasions, that at this particular moment in our history the issue is not whether our judges, lieutenant-governors, cabinet ministers or Senators need an increase in pay; the issue is the state of our economy.

The state of the economy is such that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) is preaching restraint, and he seems to be doing his best to give us some hints of what is going to be in his budget. The budget is going to contain restraint measures.

Mr. Boulanger: Right.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend across the way says "right". If from this place restraint is to be preached to the Canadian people as a whole, then how can hon. members stand in this place, time after time, and support massive increases for those who are already at the top?

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Why not tell that to your friends?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I do. I made a speech when we were dealing with the Treasury Board estimates along this same line. Reference was made to massive increases that are coming to executives in the public service. When those increases come, Madam Speaker, I shall oppose them as well. I think percentage increases should apply only to that portion of one's income that must be increased in order to meet the basic cost of living. As for any increase above that point, especially in light of today's economy, my answer is no.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Is your answer still no even to the postal workers who are asking for 70 per cent?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My answer to these outlandish requests is that they are wrong, especially in the case of those who are already some way up the scale. But I point out that this rash of outlandish demands has come about since in this House of Commons in December it was proposed to give members a 50 per cent raise.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Nonsense. We did that a long time before.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend shouts "nonsense" and others show their sensitivities with respect to this issue, but that is the fact. We have fanned the fires of inflation by what we are doing in this House.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I saw a settlement of 35 per cent for one year last November.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I am getting lots of help in saving my voice because of all these interjections, so I welcome them.