

Prime Minister's Residence Act

The rent of a soldier discharged for insubordination is paid, but a model soldier must pay three times the price of his house. Frankly, this is a bit too much! If this is what we are coming to, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether we will not be able to brag of having beaten the world record for hypocrisy.

We are paying the Prime Minister's rent while unemployed couples must manage with \$133 a month and the disabled must do with a monthly \$75 allowance to live and pay their rent.

At this stage, I would like to quote from a letter sent to me by the Québec Department of Social Affairs, directly from the office of the Minister of Health. Everybody knows that in Quebec, the Liberals are in power. Here in Ottawa, the party in power is also the Liberal party. If hardship exists, the federal government is also a bit responsible, since it agrees to pay 50 per cent of the cost of all pensions paid out in Quebec: disability pensions, needy mothers' pensions, unwed mothers' pensions and social welfare pensions. As far as the pensions for the blind are concerned, the federal government pays as much as 75 per cent of their cost in Quebec. Then to show you just what the situation is in Quebec where the federal government is concerned, I will quote from a letter I received from Mr. Richard Rivest, private secretary to the provincial Minister of Health. Here is what it says:

Dear Sir:

Further to your telegram of April 2nd instant, with respect to the above mentioned subject, I am forwarding under cover, for your information, a copy of a letter I am sending this very day to Mr. Larose.

I hope the enclosed information will prove helpful to you.

Yours truly,

There comes a time after two or three months of unanswered correspondence when I send telegrams. That is what I did in this case on April 2. I received a reply on the 23rd of April. You will admit with me that in Quebec, even under a Liberal administration, people are in no hurry to reply. Then the man concerned received the following answer:

Following the representations made on your behalf by Mr. Roland Godin, member for Portneuf, I am in a position to convey the following information in regard to your request.

According to the standards and regulations of the social assistance legislation, here is the detail of your financial situation.

Requirements: \$101

For a married couple

Income: \$133

You will therefore note that you are not eligible for the requested assistance since your income exceeds your requirements.

I regret that I cannot be of any more help to you.

Yours truly,

Richard Rivest,
Assistant Private Secretary

Mr. Speaker, that is what happened. That family was just about to lose its small home—

[Mr. Godin.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): Order. I must remind the hon. member that we are considering Bill C-241, "An Act to amend the Prime Minister's Residence Act". I realize indeed that one may state some facts to support an argument, as did the hon. member for Portneuf at the beginning of his remarks. However, since the hon. member is talking about a particular case of an individual who is trying to assert his rights to welfare, it seems to me that his remarks could be much briefer concerning this case.

Mr. Godin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, we would pay the rent of a prime minister who grants interest-free loans throughout the world to build sewage systems, while Canadians must borrow from the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation at 8½ per cent to build their own house. It is preposterous.

We can read in the bill and I quote:

RECOMMENDATION

His Excellency the Governor General has recommended to the House of Commons the present measure to amend the Prime Minister's Residences Act to change the name to the Official Residences Act; to provide that certain lands and buildings shall be maintained as residences for the person holding the recognized position of Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons and for the Speaker of the House of Commons respectively; to provide for the furnishing, maintenance, heat and keeping in repair of the buildings and for the maintenance and improvement of the lands; to provide that the Governor in Council may appoint staff for the management of the Prime Minister's residence and fix their rate of remuneration; to provide that any benefit received or enjoyed by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition or the Speaker of the House of Commons under or by virtue of this Act shall be deemed to be received by him as a living allowance expressly fixed by this Act; and to provide for consequential and related matters.

That is what the Governor General recommended. Again I think this is wonderful but I claim it is simply a gesture of generosity on the part of the Governor General. He is almost obliged to do that since he simply recommends for the Prime Minister the allowance he himself gets.

In the case of the Governor General, we tolerate that since he is the representative of Her Majesty the Queen. Moreover, we know that Her Majesty has financial difficulties at the present. And if we provide for the maintenance of the Governor General's residence, it is a favour on our part—

Mr. Ryan: Ah, dispense!

Mr. Godin:—since Canada pays all the expenses of our representatives throughout the world.

● (4:00 p.m.)

Another point I should like to touch lightly concerns the Leader of the Opposition that we find in and is referred to in clause 3 of the bill. Here again, it is easy to