

Senate and House of Commons Act

1963 until the present time from \$12,000 to \$28,000 a year, I see some justification for our increase. But I think there must be a limit in respect of this whole matter.

In my final assessment of this question, I hope the government will take a hard look at the subject of salaries and place it in its proper perspective. I believe this question should be taken out of Parliament because nobody wants to talk about his own needs. I suppose our job is to talk about everybody else's needs but not our own. I suppose our families should tell us about our needs. This is not a very pleasant subject. It is not very pleasant to be involved in an argument about what we should or should not get, because each of us has his own requirements. All one needs do is become involved in a poker game with people who each have \$100 to realize that pretty soon one or two individuals will have all the money and the others will either be in the hole or will have no money. This is the way of life.

However, if I should decide to vote against this bill I do not think I have any obligation to turn the money over to the government or to any other organization. I realize some members have committed themselves to such action. On reflection, I believe they may find in a year or two that their situation has changed and they will find things much more difficult than they do today. Whenever I vote for an issue which is voted down by the House, I have to live with it because it becomes the legislation of the land. If it should involve a tax increase, I must pay it whether I voted for or against it.

If, for instance, I should vote against Bill C-176 and Parliament should vote it in, I would have to live with it. I was in this House on the day when to all intents and purposes we voted down a government and one day later another vote was taken and the government was given another chance. Those were the rules that were established. I had to live with that decision. I voted for personal income tax exemptions, and they were not accepted—but I had to live with it. So I do not believe I must commit myself to anything. If Parliament in its wisdom says there will be an increase, so shall it be. But if it should say there will not be an increase, so also shall it be. I believe it is necessary that some of us stand up and object to these things. It will be a sad day in Parliament when someone does not rise and object to some of the actions being proposed.

I do not think an increase which can be interpreted to represent a 50 per cent salary boost can in any way be justified. We have lived through a period of several years and I believe we may be able to survive during the next year. I believe a better time for any increase would be after the next election. Perhaps a partial increase would have been acceptable at this time, but not a final one. I think that would have been a wiser course to have followed.

A formula should have been adopted in which rules would be set up to take this whole messy business out of this House. If it were taken out of this House, perhaps a commission could be set up either under the Auditor General or the Public Service Commission so that if an increase should be granted to the public service we would receive whatever increase might be applicable to

the category in which it was decided we should fall. Although this is detail in which I do not wish to become involved, I believe it would have been a wiser course to have followed.

Another thing which might be noted at this time is that most of the objections to this increase have come from members from western Canada. It must also be noted that western Canada is the area of greatest frustration at this time under the present government. It is because we reflect the feelings of our constituents that we must speak out now to indicate that there is grave concern in the minds of many people about the course of action now being followed.

• (8:20 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, this debate, which has been going on for three days so far, is a very important one in that it is a touchy matter for members to vote themselves a raise.

This matter has been thoroughly aired over the last few weeks and it seems that this publicity has not brought about a clear understanding of the situation so far. This is why we have been receiving—for I believe my colleagues also have received a lot of mail—numerous protest letters on the subject of a raise in indemnities for the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), for ministers and for members of Parliament in general.

A recurring argument advanced in these letters as well as in private conversations is that members should not be entitled to a big indemnity since they are not working. When people say that members are doing nothing, they do not mean so much that members are not working, but rather that they do not produce, that they produce little or badly, that is to say that most of the laws they enact, as is the case for that matter in most provincial legislatures, are not wanted by the electorate. In all their operations, Parliaments seem to be a knack for passing laws which people do not want. Therefore it is not surprising that there is a great deal of protest against the increase in the allowances and expenses of hon. members and senators.

Mr. Speaker, is a ticklish situation for hon. members to have to decide on their own allowances, but it seems that nobody else has the jurisdiction to do so. When an employee seeks an increase in salary from his employer, the latter considers first of all whether the employee is hard-working, qualified and efficient. Then, he will analyse the financial situation of the concern. If it is flourishing, the increase will likely be granted. But if it is in deficit, or on the verge of bankruptcy, I doubt that the employer will accept to grant the increase.

The situation being what it is, I feel the question is timely. Are all hon. members competent, industrious, efficient? That is what the public must ask themselves.

In addition, is the business of the country that prosperous, especially in the largest industry in the land, that is the Canadian Parliament?

The present economic situation leaves much to be desired. Indeed, were an industry as deep in debt as the