

Salaries Act

I think there would be general agreement that there are members of the present government who would earn substantially more in executive offices in private business or in an outside professional capacity. Undoubtedly there are members of the government who are making a personal sacrifice and will still make a personal sacrifice in dollars no matter what change is now proposed. But, Mr. Speaker, without in any way reflecting on any individual member of the government, I do not think there will be any suggestion by hon. members of the house that that applies to every member of the government. I am sure that the members of the government would not suggest that. There are members of the government whose executive capacity and experience are not comparable with that of some of the senior ministers, and that will always be the case.

We are not dealing with individuals but with a situation which must invariably arise in the formation and continuance of any government. Without the slightest reflection on any cabinet minister, I say that to set a flat rate of this kind would be establishing a system under which some highly experienced men would be receiving less than they would receive in an executive capacity in private business or in professional office, while others would be receiving far more than what they could reasonably expect to receive in any private occupation at this time. I think that suggests that there may be very good reason for considering the wisdom of adopting here the system that is already in force in Great Britain, the system that, under a different method, is made possible in Australia as well as in some other jurisdictions.

I believe that we should certainly seek to make sure that we can have in government office highly trained men to carry on the business of the country. I think that the remuneration should be such that the sacrifice will not be so great as to preclude the possibility of acceptance by those of considerable experience and executive capacity. However, in trying to arrive at an amount that would hold such men in the government at this time I do not think we should fix an amount which there certainly might be some reason to believe would be beyond what was necessary to retain some of the other members of the government.

That being so, I return to the proposition that I put forward on an earlier occasion, and I think it applies with even greater force to this measure than to the other one that was before us. In so far as the other measure was concerned, we did not have evidence

available of a variety of alternatives such as we know exist in other jurisdictions with respect to the appointment of cabinet ministers. I believe this matter should have been referred to a select committee or a royal commission. Such a body could do nothing more than digest the facts and make a report to parliament. Then parliament would have to accept full responsibility. Because that is not done and because we are adopting this method without any opportunity to consider the alternatives, I propose to vote against the measure. Having regard to the desire to maintain the dignity and responsibility of the government, I feel very strongly that it would have been advisable to refer this matter to a committee or commission as I have suggested.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, this matter is of some importance both to the house and the government and, indeed, to the country at large. I can see no force in the argument that we should refer a question of this description to a royal commission or committee. After all, we are in the position of being the representatives of the people of Canada, we are dealing with the compensation to be paid to our executive, and it strikes me that is our responsibility and that we must accept it fully.

Having said that, I want to say that we have considered the bill very carefully and think that the increase suggested is more than is warranted at this time. We are not overlooking the fact of course that the ministers will share in the increased indemnity and that the total increase to be granted at the present time raises the emoluments of office from \$18,000 to \$27,000, including the automobile allowance. I say that we have carefully considered the matter and, while most of us feel that some increase may be warranted, particularly with respect to the office of prime minister—and I have so stated on a number of occasions—nevertheless we feel that we cannot support the bill as it now stands. If the amounts were reduced, we would give consideration to the matter. As it now stands, speaking on behalf of my colleagues, we shall oppose the bill.

Mr. E. G. Hansell (MacLeod): The leader of our party has been called to the banking and commerce committee, Mr. Speaker, otherwise he would have been here to make perhaps a more official observation than I am personally able to make. Perhaps he will be here before the bill passes second reading; I do not know. I wish to say that, personally, I do not think I have any particular objection to the bill. I base my observations on several grounds.