

Members' Salaries

I must add, though—and I say these words with respect to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), who has been an ornament of the House and in his own way has made a special contribution to our proceedings in this chamber—that the time spent, in terms of hours, not only officially but unofficially on these duties is very substantial indeed, and I would like to see some recognition given to the House leaders of the other parties; it may come at a later date.

I realize there are as many problems as there are members of parliament. Each of us comes to this position from another walk of life and there are always difficulties of one kind or another. I can recall that when I was first elected in 1958, I did not know until three weeks after I had been elected what the pay would be. I must say it was quite a shock to me. After all, I had a fair law practice and a farm. Then I came down here and stayed for 3½ weeks with my family at the Chateau Laurier Hotel until I could find another place in which to live. But that was my problem. After all, none of us is conscripted; we are all here of our own volition. As I say, there are as many difficulties as there are individual members of the House.

Again, there has been a suggestion that the amount of the increase is too large. Here I wish to go into a little detail. I turned to the debates of 1971 when a bill was brought in relating back to October of 1970, and I noted that on page 5353, in the left-hand column of *Hansard* for the third session of the twenty-eighth parliament, the government House leader at that time, now the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), had this to say when introducing a similar motion:

I might mention, since it is of interest, that the total increase over the 7½-year period (between 1963 and 1970), because it is effective October last year, is 44 per cent or, if taken on an annual basis, a little better than 6 per cent. It may not be conclusive to any person who is opposed to this measure, but it is of interest and it is helpful when making comparisons, to note that between 1963 and 1970 average weekly salaries and wages for all wage-earners and salaried employees in the industrial composite rose 52.2 per cent. The salary of economists, for example, rose between 45 per cent and 50 per cent.

Incidentally, there are those who would suggest that the salaries of economists have risen by far too much and that we have too many of them.

● (1630)

The salaries of engineers increased by about 50 per cent and the salaries of university professors increased from between 63 per cent and 68 per cent. It would seem that if the increases proposed here had been undertaken on an annual basis they would not be out of line with those experienced in other comparable occupations. For example, the average annual increase for managerial personnel between 1967 and 1969 has been between 7 per cent and 9 per cent.

I take it from those remarks, made at that time by the then President of the Privy Council who introduced the measure—I have not had time to reread the debate but I do not think that particular comment was successfully contradicted—that they were looking at percentage increases of little better than 6 per cent. I have had some information prepared for me, which I will give the House, regarding the present increase. I am not going to accept complete responsibility for it because I have not had time to check it, but it has been compiled by people whose judgment I trust and it is along the following lines.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Members are now operating on a salary of \$18,000 a year, plus a tax-free expense allowance of \$8,000. Since the October, 1970, dollar is worth less than 75 cents at the present time, that \$18,000 would purchase only \$13,472 worth of goods and services in November of 1974. If members obtain a salary increase to \$27,000, in October, 1970, terms that \$27,000 is worth only \$20,207. If the consumer price index increases a further 10 per cent over the next 12 months—and I must give this government credit for doing its best to make sure that it does increase by that amount or more—the proposed salary of \$27,000 will be worth only \$18,257 in November, 1975. In other words, one year from now members will have little more purchasing power than they had in October, 1970, if current inflation rates persist.

It should be remembered that the increase to \$27,000 will have to last until 1978. As the last increase was granted in October, 1970, the present proposed salary increase covers a period of eight years. At an annual compound rate of increase over eight years, the increase in salary from the present \$18,000 to the proposed \$27,000 calculates to a 5.199 per cent increase per annum. I put those figures before the House as an indication of the situation regarding the increases proposed in this bill.

I should point out, Madam Speaker, that we are in no way compelled to follow precedents set by other legislatures, but in the province of British Columbia I understand the government not long ago made, not a 50 per cent but a 100 per cent increase in indemnities—from \$12,000 to \$24,000.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: I had occasion to disagree with Mr. Barrett from time to time, but I give him credit for recognizing the necessity of finding for his legislature people of the calibre needed to deal with current problems. What Mr. Barrett does, of course, is not binding upon the members of this House, including the members of the NDP who share the same philosophy as he. I am not certain whether the national assembly in Quebec recently proposed substantial increases. I see members on the other side nodding. I understand their salary has been increased more than the increases proposed here. If I am wrong, someone will correct me. It does not mean, of course, that because the provinces increase the salaries of their members, we have to do it here; but it indicates the judgment of those who are entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with the affairs in those provinces and the requirements of members of legislatures, the national assembly in particular.

It has also been suggested—I do not think there is any real dissent from this view—that it would have been far better if in 1971 the House, at the instance of the government, had tied any further increases in parliamentary indemnities and expense allowances to a vehicle other than the parliamentary vehicle. As the situation is now, we are apparently faced with having to explain to the public that we are increasing our salaries by 50 per cent, when in fact the figures I have referred to demonstrate that the increase is nothing like that. I say that it would have been better to make this increase on a year by year basis, or even every two years. However, I commend the government for a long last tying further increases to an