

inject figures of that kind into a speech in which the hon. member lectured the House about honesty.

Mr. MacGuigan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, if it is true, as the hon. member has said, that his leader's comparison was restricted to individual incomes, I do not have the exact figures in front of me because I have just given them to the *Hansard* reporter, but the same point has to be made: the difference between what the New Democratic Party House leader said and the facts remains as wide.

Mr. Saltsman: I do not see that that really changes the situation much. The figure we were referring to was the total amount with both salary and expenses included. We are not the only people in the world who have expenses. I get a little tired of hearing people sounding off around here about how badly treated MPs are. We are not the richest people in the world, but neither are we the most oppressed section of our society.

I see that on this auspicious occasion members of the official opposition are coming to the defence of the government. It is a nice change. Usually, during the question period, we hear them asking the government what it intends to do about the terrible inflation which is taking place in Canada, what it intends to do about the various increases that are taking place, what it intends to do about this, that and the other. But when it comes to the salaries of MPs, the question of inflation doesn't seem to arise. I wonder what the members of the official opposition would say if people in some other segment of our economy gave themselves a 50 per cent increase. Would they refrain from asking about the matter during the question period?

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): After nine years, come on!

Mr. Saltsman: It depends on the kind of case you are trying to make. When we received the last increase it was broadly understood that it was not only for that time; it was for catch-up and it was for the years ahead.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Nonsense. It was only your own leader who made that suggestion in argument.

Mr. Saltsman: This is a difficult debate for all hon. members. It is as difficult for me as it is for members who are taking a different position. I want to make it clear that it is not a question of having a superior morality; it is not a question of being holier than thou.

Mr. Cafik: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Saltsman: I would be glad to entertain any questions at the end of my speech. I am sorry that what I am saying is causing this kind of reaction. I see the hon. member appears to be very anxious to ask his question, so I will accept it now.

Mr. Cafik: I appreciate that a great deal. I am certainly not trying to have a run at any member of this House. I understand the concern of the hon. member. He expresses a difficulty he shares with others in dealing with this subject. I wonder whether he would find any difficulty about supporting the amendment which I am putting for-

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ward, an amendment which would make this permissive legislation—members who do not want an increase would not have to take it. Would the hon. member be agreeable to supporting an approach of that kind?

● (1640)

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Speaker, that sounds like an excellent suggestion and I am really glad it is being put forward, because we should be extending a principle of the Liberals and Conservatives on that basis. Members of the Liberal Party voted against the old age pension for years, and are still voting against any amendments we bring in for an increase in those pensions so they themselves will not get increased old age pensions. The Conservative Party, which took such a vicious stand against it, would be deprived of the Canada Pension Plan; and those who do not like the family allowance program could, on a conscience basis, refuse that allowance.

Mr. Speaker, all this is nonsense and the hon. member knows it. I am just sorry that I gave him the chance to come in with that ridiculous kind of statement. Over and over again we have voted against things that we know we cannot even refuse. We know that, but are we going to curtail a very important debate in this House because of that kind of spurious suggestion? I think the debate deserves better than that.

Let me get back to the subject of this debate and its significance for members of this House. Despite the fact that the NDP appear to be on the side of the angels, what is significant is that no member of this House will come out of the debate covered with glory. All of us will suffer, Mr. Speaker. Every party in this House, every member of this House, and in the long run this parliament, will be discredited. It is important to remember that. At a time when most of us are going around talking about the evils of inflation and the need for restraint, and denouncing various greedy elements in our society, we ourselves set an example of greed. That is what is wrong with the whole thing. This party has taken a position and it looks as though we are on the side of the angels in this debate. Just look at the Gallup polls. We have not received any credit for the position we have taken. Parliament is being run down in this country.

It is all very well to take the position that the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) took, and to receive laughter and applause. I wish we could train other people as well as he has trained his members. He took off on the press, Mr. Speaker. Just this morning an editorial suggested that we should get absolutely nothing until we lick the problem of inflation. Obviously, we are not going to solve the total problem of inflation in this or any other parliament. Obviously, members of parliament are entitled to some increase. That is not what we are debating. But to take off on the press and say it has no right to criticize us is not realistic. Other countries have been known to step on the press when they get out of line, but that is not our way. While I may not like what the press has to say about us, I must confess that it is not entirely undeserved.

Had it not been for the NDP digging in its heels at Christmas time and perhaps being a little outrageous, the increase would have gone through in a snap. That is what the government was hoping for. By taking the stand we