

Senate and House of Commons Act

sive. I have no objection to members from some of the ridings in British Columbia or other ridings where expenses are very heavy receiving such consideration. We all know that those who represent rural ridings spend a great percentage of their salary in covering the area, and I feel no one would have any objection to special consideration in such cases. However, I feel that most members would agree that a first priority should be the provision of better facilities here in Ottawa. I would have preferred to see the money allocated for salary increases go to research facilities and avenues which would enable members to deal more effectively with the problems of the Canadian people. We are loaded with work, and a great deal of research is necessary in order to deal with it but the facilities and staff are not available for this purpose. When legislation comes before this House, we should be able to research it properly if we are to criticize effectively. If it is our aim to improve the lot of Members of Parliament and the service which they give to the country, then I think this should have priority. I will not say anymore, Mr. Speaker. I think we have covered the bill quite adequately. I say without hesitation that if the bill comes to a vote this afternoon, I intend to cast my vote against it.

● (3:40 p.m.)

An hon. Member: But you will take the money.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the riding of Shefford (Mr. Rondeau) has just demonstrated, as all my other colleagues have done, why the increases involved in Bill C-242 are uncalled for.

I should therefore like to briefly express the views of the majority of the citizens of the riding of Champlain in regard to this increase.

I must admit that the population cannot stomach the discrimination practice by the government by bringing forward such a bill. Telling workers to tighten their belts, businessmen, industry and trade to restrict expenses, advising everyone to avoid escalation of prices, and thereupon increasing salaries and expenses of members of Parliament is unacceptable arrogance.

I do not deny the objective value of our functions. It is difficult to evaluate the vast responsibilities they involve. However, in order to be fair to each member, we could have left the members' indemnity at \$12,000 a year and tried hard to find ways to reimburse real expenditures directly related to the profession, or rather to the responsible role that we fill.

It is difficult indeed for the citizens of this country who are the shareholders of this tremendous financial establishment which is the government administration, to agree to higher indemnities and expenditures for their directors, when they find that not only is the establishment not profitable, but it is systematically getting the country into debt if not bankruptcy.

If the country was well administered, it would distribute dividends and then, the shareholders, who are the citizens of this country, would be only too happy to grant their good directors an appropriate salary.

[Mr. Harding.]

But they all know that it is not so. That is why I wanted, in a few words, to illustrate the views of my constituents of Champlain.

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to take part in this debate on the motion for third reading of Bill C-242, but before it being put, I should merely like to state the position of the Ralliement Crémittiste on this question.

I think that any Canadian will agree to the principle of increased allowances. Nobody is stupid enough to refuse a salary increase. However, considering the timing of this proposal, other considerations should be taken into account. We do object to the timing of this legislation.

I do not feel it is appropriate, at a time when there are in Canada 800,000 unemployed and 1,500,000 students seeking summer jobs, when, as my colleague said awhile ago, the Canadian people are asked to tighten their belts, manufacturers, to reduce capital expenditures, and the provinces, to avoid economic development outlays, to bring before the House a legislation designed to increase the sessional and expense allowances of members.

Some comparisons are likely to be made. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said, not so long ago, that members of Parliament are less paid than some high-ranking government officials. Indeed! But public servants do not have to get elected every two, three or four years. That is for sure.

We do not hear people disparage senior officials, deputy ministers or others earning \$30,000 \$35,000 or \$40,000 a year. We do not hear them criticize hockey or baseball players earning \$100,000 per year. That is something everybody admits.

But when it comes to Parliament, things are a little different because the government organization is the one that determines the members' allowance, not hockey or baseball players nor senior officials. We have to make the decision, we have to vote for or against an increase in our salaries and allowances.

Mr. Speaker, the members are in a somewhat ridiculous position and the Crémittistes have offered the government an alternative solution. We have suggested a means of helping the members of Parliament without increasing their allowances or expenses.

For instance, we have demanded marginal services, such as those provided to the Quebec provincial members who, in addition to a yearly indemnity of \$18,000, as their federal counterparts, have in their riding secretarial facilities paid by the provincial government.

Provincial members who must attend parliamentary committees between sessions are paid \$50 per day. In addition, they receive an allowance for the expenses incurred in their own riding. No newspaperman is against that. But, if federal members ask for similar services, we make the headlines.

We should be able to provide those services to our constituents so as to be constantly in touch with them and aware of what is going on in our constituencies. We are in Ottawa from eight to ten months each year, let us