



DAVE'S DAIRY

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We are all getting on Clarkson's back about the increase in Parliamentary salaries, and Clarkson tells me that every person he meets says something either rude or funny about it. We all realise that it's a very awkward time to have an increase, with the prices of many products going down and none of us being particularly prosperous.

Quite a number of us got Clarkson bailed up in the town the other day and really got stuck into the poor coot. I think Clarkson has got rather sick of hearing this matter discussed and having everyone twisting his tail because he was quite testy about the whole business. He said, amongst other things, when he could get a word in, that it wasn't his idea and that the increase was granted after a pretty exhaustive inquiry by an independent Commission. This didn't seem to impress anybody much because we all know Clarkson pretty well and we know he doesn't really need the increase because he's got his farm behind him. He agreed with this but he also says that if a Member of Parliament has no other income he really needs the increase, because he has so many calls on his money (like paying subscriptions to institutes and Show Societies and so on). I suppose there's something in this, though I can't help thinking that it would be better if members were to get a bit less money and then we could tell them that contributing to this and that wasn't reckoned as part of their duties.

Clarkson was quite bitter about the way the electoral allowances were reckoned in as part of the salary, and he said it was the only business he had ever heard of where travelling expenses were included as part of the total annual salary. And he said that because he was in a big rural electorate, he reckoned he would use up more than the total allowance on car expenses alone. But he couldn't get away with it so easily. We told him that, a few years ago, before he even thought of going into Parliament, he was always being rude about the way the Members of Parliament were paid and how they never did anything besides talk and sit in the sun. Clarkson said he couldn't remember saying exactly that but I could see that he could remember more than he really wanted to. He then said that if we thought that he was getting too much then we could jolly well have a go ourselves because there was nothing to stop any of us and as far as he was concerned we could all jump in the lake.

I could see we were hitting him on the raw a bit and it wasn't long before he stalked off and left us to chew things over between ourselves. I suppose there's something in what he says about those members who have no other income, but those who have, I think, could well be getting too much. And I don't think it's really a full time job for some members, although some work harder than others. I think Clarkson would admit that it isn't a full time job for him but then he's only been there for a few months and people haven't really got on to his wheel yet.

But how are they going to differentiate between the hard workers and the lazy ones, and between those who have other income and those who haven't? Perhaps we should prevent people with other incomes, such as farmers, going into Parliament. But that doesn't seem right either because, although Clarkson may not be much good, at least he does understand our problems. Anyhow, that is enough about this for this week, or you will be getting sick of the subject as Clarkson is. But I will be very interested to hear what Clarkson does about it.

I bet he wishes he hadn't opened his big mouth so wide in the past.

I spent almost all of the Easter week-end filling in that form while the rest of you were lazing about. It was an awful experience. Of course, it isn't anywhere accurate but I suppose all the policeman cares about is that he gets some sort of an answer. But I can't help smiling at the thought that some bright boy in an office somewhere will sit down quite happily and work out all kinds of big sums using my information (and probably yours, too) as the basis for his calculations. He will probably get his sums right, but I hate to think of what they are based on.

What a lovely rain on Easter Monday!