

MPs, ALL BUT ONE, PASS UP CHANCE TO SEEK PAY HIKE

By Bruce Phillips
Southam News Service

OTTAWA — After years of backroom grumbling about their salary, the nation's Members of Parliament turned chicken Monday when they had a chance to air their grievances in public.

Not a single MP responded to the opportunity for debate or MP's pay after the subject had been introduced by Douglas Fisher, CCF-NDP member for Port Arthur.

An hour had been set aside

for the subject, but when The Commons fell silent after Mr. Fisher's 10-minute contribution the debate was adjourned and the House moved on to other business.

This apparent disinterest was hardly an accurate deflection of the MP's true feelings. Few subjects get as thorough a working-over in their off-record conversations as the \$10,000 annual stipend, which almost to a man they feel is inadequate.

Politicians first and salary-earners second, the MPs apparently felt the subject of pay raises too hot to handle with an election in the offing.

There were reports some of the Liberal and Conservative MPs had been prepared to speak in support of Mr. Fisher's plea for more money, but they had been steered off by the party whips.

In its main outlines, Mr. Fisher's case was a familiar one. Almost alone among the

MPs, he has been willing to state repeatedly in public the views which most of his colleagues in all parties share, that for most members the \$8,000 salary and \$2,000 tax-free expense allowance is not enough.

For Mr. Fisher, the present salary level almost ended his political career. He agreed to contest his Port Arthur constituency again only if his home-town party workers accepted that he should move his family to Ottawa and eliminate the overhead of maintaining dual residence.

Mr. Fisher admitted the touchy nature of the issue which persuades many MPs to remain silent publicly. The last time he raised the matter, he had received a barrage of critical mail, typified by a Calgary woman who said "if you men cannot live on \$10,000 a year, how do you expect the pensioners to live on \$55 a month?".