

Government Orders

This particular bill is this in essence. It says the manager will manage because the manager is impatient. Yes, we do need to have changes in our Public Service Act. Yes, in the past and right up to now, a great number of the decisions regarding employment, staffing, transfers and even the motions, were rather a long, arduous and difficult task.

Now we have swung the pendulum completely. We are about to give the authority to the manager to manage in his or her way with his or her attitude which could be tyrannical.

• (1540)

The Liberal Party, along with the NDP, has proposed quite a variety of amendments. I would say that 90 to 95 per cent of the amendments came from the Liberal Party. I was amazed at the reaction, the chuckling and the giggling on the government side. I was amazed at the impatience, the deaf ears, the lack of attention, the lack of compassion and the failure to really understand what a large work force should be and could be in 2000 and beyond.

[*Translation*]

We have proposed amendments and I have the pleasure to comment further on these amendments. Since PS 2000 gives a substantial amount of power to the manager, it is only normal that several unions and organizations be concerned this will create an environment where such authority over the employees' careers, especially women and minorities, could be abused.

While the Public Service Commission is currently investigating complaints of abuse of authority, nothing in this bill requires the commission to conduct such investigations. Employees' representatives have expressed concern about what could happen if the commission as a third party, were not officially recognized the power to investigate complaints. The worst case scenario would be that the head of the department that you complained about would be designated to investigate. Can you imagine that, Madam Speaker? This is certainly an unacceptable scenario. This amendment is only making official what the Public Service Commission has been doing for ages. It ensures a fair and just investigation.

Another advantage of these amendments is to ensure that the Public Service Commission not only may, but shall, take action against abuse of authority. There is also a possibility that certain instances of harassment could be tied directly to the merit principle. As the so-called keeper of this merit principle, it stands to reason that the commission be officially recognized as having the power to investigate complaints in that area.

Another proposed amendment to clause 10 of Bill C-26 is designed to make it clear that the merit principle will generally be based on competence, so that the best qualified—I repeat, best qualified—candidate will be selected for the job. We want to make sure that this idea of competence will prevail in the definition of merit and that the notion of “competence measured by such standard as the commission may establish” be the exception to the rule.

When government developed this new definition of merit in clause 10 it did not stop to think that this could be setting a dangerous precedent. It will make it difficult for the court to interpret the traditional definition of merit which ensured that the best qualified person—I repeat, best qualified—gets the job. The norm could well become “selection based on competence, as measured by such standard of competence as the commission may establish”.

The other element of these amendments backs up the preceding amendments on employment equity. The idea is to ensure that the Public Service Commission will take into consideration minority groups in our society before establishing standards for competitions and personnel selection.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I would like to correct some drivel that I heard in an earlier speech in this debate. It was from this side of the House but it was from down there, from the New Democrats.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River made a speech earlier today that was absolute drivel. I know that the hon. member who is paying such close attention will agree with me when she hears the facts and figures that I have to relate.

An hon. member: I can hardly wait.