

Government Orders

serve well. However, with morale at the lowest level possible how do we anticipate that things will get better?

We are opposed to the PS 2000 Bill C-26.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to offer my comments on the legislation we are presently considering before this House. They are items of great importance not only to the Public Service but to all Canadians who on a daily basis utilize the very valuable assistance that only the Public Service of Canada can render to the people of Canada. These are in areas so important that they affect the day-to-day activity of all of us who work for the Government of Canada.

These are areas such as contracting out, the very important area today of employment equity, how we treat our casual employees in our community, and the prospects of doing away with the merit principle which is certainly contrary to the position of the party I represent and speak on behalf of today.

It is an unhappy fact that labour relations in Canada have never been worse in our history. The labour unrest of last September and October revealed a country at odds with itself. Workers were most unhappy. Workers were frustrated and feared for their future. They were dealing with an uncaring government which seemed oblivious to the damage it was creating in the labour relations field.

It is very obvious to everyone that the Public Service is in need of fundamental reform in Canada today. Canada's Public Service totters along backed by legislation enacted in 1967, and before that in 1918. It certainly is time that we took a look at the complete system of negotiating with the employees of the Government of Canada and provided new, forward looking guidelines for the 21st century.

It is essential that in doing so we legislators provide the very best model we can formulate. After all, Canadians in the civil service were once regarded as a model for all other countries in the world to follow.

It is evident that those days are long gone and Canada's Public Service personnel have never been unhappier, never been so demoralized and never been without clear-cut goals. Certainly we all know this

affects the service that is rendered to the average Canadian on a day-to-day basis.

• (1240)

It used to be that the Public Service was expected to work toward the interests of Canada as a whole, but over the last seven years it is evident that the Public Service has become another target for so-called privatization in the questionable attempts at reform. I will return to this later.

As I said a few moments ago, the Public Service is in dire need of reform and revitalization for the years ahead. That brings us to PS 2000.

It is the view of the Official Opposition that PS 2000 has been a spectacular flop. Far from being an exercise in democracy, this legislation provides for an arbitrary list of reforms. No one was consulted. Where was the dialogue? The Standing Committee on Public Accounts of the House of Commons found the document lacking in several respects and recommended the establishment of a special committee of the House of Commons to hold hearings to review PS 2000.

What did this government do? It went ahead with the preparation of legislation, ignored the recommendations of an all-party committee of the House Commons, and announced that the only review would be through a legislative committee.

We on this side of the House should be a little more used to the methods employed in this legislation as it is so apparent that this government has been using its mandate in many other forms and particularly to control the activities of the Public Service of Canada.

The intense dissatisfaction with this government demonstrated so strongly last fall with several weeks of strikes in the public sector points to the pressing need for a complete overhaul of labour relations in this country.

It is essential that an omnibus bill of this sort address the most pressing needs of the Public Service. In some respects we on this side of the House are prepared to countenance certain clauses of the legislation that do in our view strengthen Canada's Public Service.

There are all too many areas where we have serious questions about the bill's suitability with respect to progressive employment practices. As an example, the runaway trend toward contracting out which this govern-