

Canada Elections Act

I set about looking for a job. I did not say that, since an election has been called for some time next year and I have decided to retire, I will start looking for a job right now and let my responsibility to my riding fall down while I look after myself”.

I appreciate my colleague bringing this Bill forward so we can have some debate on it. I know he brings it forward on a well-intentioned basis. I can understand why he is doing it. I think that the provision which guarantees every Member an opportunity to run for office is perfect. There is no question but that that should be there. I have a difficulty, however, with forcing that extension to the career of the Member. I have difficulty for the employer and the employee, and I would have difficulty looking anyone in the eye and saying that any Member could step right back into that position and do the type of job that the employer would expect. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking against the Bill and will vote against it at such time as it comes to a vote.

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this Bill. As the House is fully aware, I always enjoy debating with my hon. friend, the Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez). I very rarely agree with him, but we do have some warm exchanges and we will probably have one today. I want to tell him that I understand perfectly why he is bringing this Bill forward. I was in the same position myself, being a provincial civil servant when I decided to seek public office. I won a nomination and got a leave of absence to run in the election, which I won.

Unless it has changed in the intervening seven years, in the provincial legislature there is the possibility of an individual being allowed, for five years, to return to the position, but not to the exact job, which he or she held when they ran for the first time. In other words, they could apply for a job for a period of five years in the category that they were in when they left. Once that five years was up, you are on your own. That basically meant that if you served one term and got defeated within five years, you could apply for a job at that level and would be given first consideration for the first opening that came along. I believe that is the way it is worded, unless it has been changed in the intervening seven years.

This is open-ended. I think the citizens of the country could rightly criticize us for taking care of ourselves forever. I just do not think that that is proper. We do make sacrifices to come into the House. The Hon. Member made reference early in his speech to there being no greater service to a country than to be a Member of Parliament, other than perhaps fighting to defend one's country. I took some exception with that. That is not because I am not proud of being a Member of Parliament, and not because I am not motivated for the job, because I am. I enjoy it very much and I plan to continue with it as long as the people of Brampton-Georgetown desire to have me as their Member of Parliament. However, I thought that that statement was rather arrogant and a rather inflated opinion of oneself.

People who work with the unfortunate in the country, at great sacrifice, are contributing to the country in a very meaningful way, no more and no less than a Member of Parliament. This is one way of serving the country, but there are so many other areas in which people make sacrifices to serve their country or their community, whether here or abroad. Therefore, although I respect very much the position that I hold here, I do not feel that there is no greater service in this country, because there are so many others that serve so well.

If the Member presented a more reasonable Bill which was not so open-ended, it would be worth while taking a very close look at it. However, I am concerned about this type of Bill that guarantees everything. What risk is there in running for Parliament? What sacrifice are you making? With these provisions one could say: “I should not worry about it. I am not serious about running. I can run and will be guaranteed my job. If I serve for 10 years and get a Member's pension I can return to my job and it will be there for me”. What about the employer who must have that position available around every election time? That is quite a responsibility to place on an employer. I would not want to ask an employer to keep a position open in that way.

Mr. Rodriguez: That's not what I said. You didn't read the Bill. Why don't you read the Bill?

Mr. McDermid: Do we do that for the people in the communications industry, for example?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Papproski): I regret that the hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired.

• (1800)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 46 deemed to have been moved.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS—NIAGARA RIVER POLLUTION— UNITED STATES CLEAN-UP PROPOSAL. (B) GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, on October 17 last year, Mr. Lee Thomas, the head of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, met with Canada's Environment Minister (Mr. McMillan) to discuss an action plan for the cleaning up of the toxic waste dumps along the Niagara River. The Minister of the Environment would not discuss at the time the contents of the plan with the public or the House, even though the releasing agency, namely, the