

● (1710)

Simply put, the Bill would allow members of staff who have three years of service to be in a position where, should an opening arise—and I am rather careful about my language in that regard—should an opening arise in the Public Service for which these people would be qualified, as determined and judged by the Public Service itself, they would be permitted to enter the Public Service without benefit of an examination. That is all that is being asked. This is the same consideration given to the staff of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Leader of the Opposition.

Before presenting this Private Members' Bill this afternoon I have had the opportunity of speaking to the Hon. Member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Ellis) and the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy). I do not know their decision, individually or on behalf of their Parties, but I believe there is a hesitancy on the part of the Government, which I find surprising. I have beside me the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Foster) and it may be that we will be able to get this Bill through all stages this afternoon if there is all-Party agreement. It may be that we could look to a motion for reference of this Bill to an all-Party committee. However, I hope and think that I have explained decently the kind of moral obligation we owe, not to our personal secretaries and staff, but to all the people who join elected Members to serve us with such loyalty and effort. We should try to give them a chance.

I should explain what the numbers are. They are so pitifully small that I wonder why anyone might object to this Bill. Basically, at every election we lose about 100 Members of Parliament out of 282. That means a staff component of about 300 people. The administration of the House of Commons tells me that we could not reasonably expect to see many more than 100 people who might not find a job again in the House of Commons. Therefore, I think we are looking at anywhere between 35 and 50 staff members of the House of Commons, once every four years, who may not have found a job but who can use their experience for the benefit of Canada in the Public Service. We are talking about piddling numbers of people, but we are also talking about recognizing their loyalty and their commitment, and their continuing ability to serve Canada.

I have asked, Mr. Speaker, that the officers at the Table have the forms ready for putting the Bill through all stages. I do not know the situation on either side of the House, whether this might be acceptable. If that does not work, then possibly we could send the subject matter of the Bill to committee. But again I say, and I think this is perhaps typical of me, that this is not a partisan Bill. This is a Bill to take care of people who have cared for us for many years.

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, the sponsor of this Bill has very clearly and concisely set out exactly what it does. He has given the details, and there is no need for me to repeat them. I want to say that the Committee on Management and Members' Services, of which I am a

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member, has recommended to the Speaker in the past month and a half a number of changes in the status of our staff. Those changes include the subject matter of this Bill. This is another way that some of us felt we might help to promote the subject matter of Bill C-215. That committee is not really a very partisan committee and Members on all sides felt that it was a worth-while topic indeed and something that should be done for our staff.

The House of Commons is created for Members of Parliament. Everything that happens around here, from the service provided by the ladies and gentlemen who take down our every word, to that given by the staff in the restaurants, the bus drivers, elevator operators and messengers, clerks, everything that is done here, is for the benefit of Members of Parliament. Yet I doubt there is a Member in this House who would not concede that without his staff he is not really capable of doing very much on his own. They are the ones that make it work. While some of us might be impresarios or prima donnas, they are the ones who do the daily dog work, put in the long hours for what is really minimal pay by comparison to their counterparts in other parts of the Public Service. They are perhaps not badly paid by comparison to the real world, but given the pay scale in the Public Service, they are not overpaid. What is so very important is that they really do not have much in the way of security. They are personal staff. I happen to have been extremely fortunate in that one member of my staff has been with me since the day I started on the Hill. I shudder to think sometimes how I would run my office without her. I know that many of the suggestions made in the past few months by the committee to the Speaker reflect the gratitude to the staff which I am expressing now.

I suppose it would be too partisan of me to agree that the Hon. Member's figures are almost exactly right, and that truly, come the next election, there may well be 100 less Liberals re-elected and, therefore, 300 members of Liberal staff who are looking for jobs. You will recall those were his numbers, not mine, Mr. Speaker. I only put a label on them to make it just a little bit more accurate. However, I will not add that connotation to it.

Mr. Blaker: A point of order.

Mr. Ellis: You do not have a point of order, and you know it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary on a point of order, I hope.

Mr. Blaker: I am not sure if this is acceptable under our rules, but I felt I had been misquoted and I want to explain something. I did not refer to any number of staff who might become unemployed as a result of changes of Liberal Members of Parliament. I indicated quite clearly that in every election the House of Commons has a change of approximately 100 Members. That applies to all sides, not any particular political Party.