

Public Servants' Training

riding of Broadview 30 years ago it was 95 per cent Anglo-Saxon. The other 5 per cent was made up of different groups from Europe. In 1977 it is between 40 per cent and 45 per cent Anglo-Saxon. The second biggest group is the Greeks and Macedonians, and the third group is the Chinese. Then there is a large group of blacks from the Caribbean and other islands. We have many East Indians from India, and many nationalities from Europe.

● (1630)

What I am trying to point out is that public servants have to be trained to deal with the problems of people in ridings such as Broadview. My example can be multiplied right across the country. Public servants not only have to be fluent in one or more languages, they have to be competent in the subject matters with which they deal. I cannot help but think that pension problems, unemployment insurance problems and immigration problems have to be dealt with by public servants who can relate to people who have difficulties regarding language and regarding the understanding of the contents of legislation which we pass. Therefore I am rather pleased and proud of the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier, whom I have known for almost ten years and who has played a very active and articulate part as a parliamentary secretary. I think he is to be commended on the idea set forth in this motion.

I am not going to speak much longer, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to say that I agree with the amendment moved by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker). In fact the acting House leader spoke to me during the debate and asked me how I felt about the motion, and I said that the subject matter of the motion should be referred to committee, where it can be studied in depth and witnesses can be called to present their ideas. As a result of this I hope the government will take the initiative to set up in the National Capital Region a school to train public servants.

I hope this idea is not confined to members in Ottawa and the surrounding area but is common right across Canada. It requires the support and initiative of us all. Therefore we in the New Democratic Party are proud to endorse this motion.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I also rise to endorse not only the motion but the amendment moved by my good friend, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker). I was particularly pleased at the remarks of the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert) because, as he pointed out, it appears too frequently to be the case that it is the members in the local area who are carrying the load of representing public servants in terms of the problems of the public service generally. Only too seldom do we hear the kind of intervention we have heard from the hon. member for Broadview, and I simply want to say—I am sure I speak on behalf of all local members—that we particularly welcome his interest in the problems of the public service.

The motion before us today is certainly one which I enthusiastically endorse. There is a major problem of training in the public service—access to training, fairness of training. We hear of gross irregularities in some cases in terms of such

[Mr. Gilbert.]

things as eligibility for leave to continue one's studies at public expense. This is something which has not always been uniformly administered. There is need for training of a large number of specialists, who are recruited for their technical knowledge but who know nothing about the principle of the public service and its operation. This is a very serious defect in the present scheme of things.

Indeed, if I were to offer criticisms of personnel administration in the Public Service of Canada today, apart from the collective bargaining side, I would say that the lack of a systematic policy of transfer would be done. The lack of a proper, fair, and generally recognized system of training and professional development would be another. For this reason I commend my colleague for Ottawa-Vanier on his motion today.

It has been my contention that the government must look at a lot more than just a little patchwork here and a little patchwork there with the public service. The day is long overdue for the creation of a ministry of the public service with an over-all responsibility to look at these things. Until we have such a ministry I think we are going to continue to see such situations as delay in bringing amendments to the Public Service Staff Relations Act before this House. We had a joint report from this place and the other place laid on the Table in January, 1976, before this parliament, and I am still waiting for the legislation to have first reading in this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Francis: There are many other initiatives, Mr. Speaker, which could and would be taken were there one particular arm of the Government of Canada charged with the responsibility of administering all those little tag ends of personnel administration which are tucked away in different government departments. When I inquire about the Public Service Staff Relations Act amendments, I am told that that is the responsibility of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), though how he gets that responsibility I fail to understand.

I gather that my colleague who put forward this motion today says that this matter should be under the direction of the Public Service Commission. I see he is shaking his head; I was not clear from the context under what direction it should be. I would hope it would not be another of that amorphous family of agencies reporting directly to parliament, such as the Auditor General, the Electoral Boundaries Commissioner, the Official Languages Commissioner, the Public Service Commission—a large group of agencies which, in effect, get no ministerial supervision or direction in far too many cases.

I think the creation of this school would raise certain questions, such as what would be the provincial participation, what would be the community participation, to what extent would it be a kind of in-house development, to what extent would it be open to others to participate for the free exchange of ideas? These broad questions are implied in the motion.

I think the motion is a perfectly good one, one of many steps that should be taken. But I look forward to the day when the government comes to this House and says that the public