

*Private Members' Business*

If I lost my seat I would hate to think that people had no other opportunity in this city after working their guts out for me for three or four years because they happened to work for a Liberal. I think they are a natural for the Public Service of Canada. It should almost be a prerequisite. I do not see it as any special wedge.

When we talk about a stream of new blood, I think the Public Service should welcome the new blood that would come into the Public Service after working in an office of a member of Parliament. When one goes to work in the Public Service, one might go to work for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Department of Communications or the Department of Employment and Immigration and one's work tends to be singular; but when one works for a member of Parliament, one never knows from one hour to the next what issue one has to face. Assistants to members of Parliament should be supported if after an election they opt for a Public Service job. I for one think that they should be given that opportunity, so I support this bill.

**Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West):** Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to the amendment since I have already spoken on the principal motion. I want to make it absolutely clear that there is certainly some misunderstanding in some people's minds about what this amendment is all about.

It refers the subject matter of the bill to committee for further study and essentially withdraws the bill. I am not sure it is entirely proper to withdraw a bill we are debating, to withdraw every single word of it and still assume that we have the bill before us for debate. Nonetheless, that is the motion, and I presume it has been ruled in order.

It is important to point out to my colleague who has just spoken what the bill does. The subject matter that he endorses is not to give staff of members of Parliament a chance at being employed in the Public Service but to give them priority over all others being employed in the Public Service.

It is important to recognize that the amendment to this bill asks that it be referred to committee. It has been brought forward with no consultations with the unions. We as a party have taken a very strong stand against the whole process of PS 2000, reform of the Public Service,

because there has been no involvement of the unions and of the front line workers in developing the recommendations of the PS 2000 amendments to legislation and amendments to administrative procedures, which will substantially affect the working lives of a quarter of a million Canadians. It would be inconsistent for us to endorse, even in principle, this bill. We are now being asked to refer it to a committee so that it can be brought forward, possibly, as a somewhat amended piece of legislation.

I appreciate the difficult situation in which people are placed to work for members of Parliament, the immeasurable skills, both personal and technical, that they bring to that kind of employment, and the immense learning that they go through in a variety of fields. That would be helpful to the Public Service if they were there as employees.

However, many of those people are hired on the basis of their political affiliation with us, the right to be appointed to the public service on a priority basis, rather than on any objective assessment of merit. I do not think a bill which gives people priority in hiring over others within the Public Service who may be looking for a promotion to a position is a just bill. It is not something that is based on liberal principles of a federal Public Service based on opportunities for hiring, for promotion, and for transfers founded on one's ability, not on who one happens to know.

The member has said that it is important that people who have come to work for us have an opportunity to be employed in this city. It is evident from that comment that he still believes that most job opportunities in this region are in the Public Service. That is not true and has not been for many decades now. Less than 20 per cent of the employment in the Ottawa-Carleton region is in the Public Service.

It is vital to recognize that in the last few years, as a result of the downsizing program of the federal government and as a result of assuming that it can make scapegoats out of the Public Service, thousands of people have lost their jobs. Some 25,000 people have been affected by downsizing. Many of those people have worked for the Public Service, not for two or three years but for 10, 20, or 30 years. They find themselves unemployed at a time when seeking a new job is extremely difficult.