

*Adjournment Debate*

been carried out in respect of the land chosen for a project of the Ontario Housing Corporation.

However, no one of course is perfect, everyone may be misinformed, and as I said at the beginning of my remarks, the hon. member can be assured that if he will submit us some information concerning the pieces of land acquired by the Ontario Housing Corporation which in his opinion might justify further enquiry, I have no doubt that the minister would like the hon. member to impart the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation with that information.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE—APPOINTMENT OF MICHAEL PITFIELD—POSSIBLE CHANGE IN CRITERIA FOR MAKING APPOINTMENTS

**Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, on October 8 I raised a question with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I asked if he would make a statement on motions outlining the principles which were now to be followed for appointments to the senior public service. I drew particular reference to Mr. Michael Pitfield, and asked the Prime Minister to indicate whether that appointment suggested a replacement of the merit system by the buddy system.

The Prime Minister ducked that question, and instead attacked my right as a member of parliament to ask about the appointment and credentials of an official who now has more influence than most members of cabinet, and whose only unusual qualification for that office appears to be his personal friendship with the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister indicated that an appointment at that level was at the discretion of the government. Of course it is, but it is the duty of this parliament and the members here to question the judgment that is used in exercising that discretion. That is a matter of concern not only to this House, but to people outside, including the *Ottawa Journal*, which wrote shortly afterwards, and I quote:

Prime Minister Trudeau... has shown remarkably bad judgment in choosing an intimate friend for a position so exquisitely sensitive. . . . A Prime Minister needs to have friends and advisers around him whom he can trust completely, who will give him their first call on their loyalty. But the place for them is on his own staff, not in the public service.

That appointment started a precedent. It is inevitable that when the present Prime Minister leaves, so will Mr. Pitfield. Some other favourite of some other Prime Minister will come in. The senior job in the Canadian Public Service has, by this one act, been made a partisan political position. That act has changed our system of government and, in one stroke, threatened the political independence of the Canadian public service.

Mr. Pitfield's appointment is the most celebrated case, but it is not an isolated instance. That is the matter which is of grave concern to this House. His appointment is part of a pattern of moving political friends into a public service which can be respected and effective only so long as it is free from the suspicion of partisanship. Not only in this last month have we had the appointment of Mr. Pitfield to his high position, we have also had the appointment of Mr. Jim Davey, late of the Prime Minister's office and late of the Minister of Transport's office, to a senior

[Mr. De Bané.]

public service position in the Department of Transport. We have seen the Hon. Paul Martin dispatched as High Commissioner to Great Britain. These people now enter the public service to join others like Timothy Porteous, Edgar Benson, Mike McCabe, Paul Gérin-Lajoie, and who knows how many others.

It is known to this House and accepted that for some time there has been a provision allowing the shifting into the public service of people who have served, in the senior executive capacity, political ministers and others. Because of the salary level at which these people shift, they inevitably go into the public service in a policy position.

I placed a question on the order paper to find out how many of these people there are in the public service and what areas of policy they influence. I did this because I think it is highly important to the system.

The practice poses three critical threats to our system. First, it destroys the balance which is so essential between the elected politicians and the appointed public servants. At the same time it threatens and jeopardizes the long range independence of the Canadian public service.

● (2220)

The second threat arises because it undermines morale in the service itself. It removes the incentive to excel. Indeed, it fosters an incentive simply to please one's master because excellence is no longer the standard which determines promotion; it is friendship which is now becoming the standard by which promotion is achieved.

The third threat is that it narrows the basis of advice on which national decisions are made. This is a diverse country, and the government should reflect that diversity. But it will not do so if the public service is to be formed in the image of a partisan prime minister.

I asked the Prime Minister to tell us the guidelines to be followed in making that kind of appointment. He has given us no guidelines. I also put a private member's notice of motion on the order paper in an effort to ensure parliamentary scrutiny of the growing powers of the office of the Prime Minister, which appear to be at the root of the problem we face today. What we must consider is not just a question of Mr. Pitfield's credentials; he is obviously a brilliant person, an able man. Nor is it a question of stopping patronage, which has been going on for ever and ever.

The Prime Minister, by this action, by this pattern he has established, is changing the very nature of the Canadian public service and the very nature of our system of government. He is bypassing merit, undermining morale, compromising an essential independence, and eroding the protection of regions or groups whose interests are not represented by the political government of the day. It is regrettable that the Prime Minister should have indicated, in putting aside this question, that he wants no attention paid to the process that is taking place. It is not too much to say that he is achieving by stealth changes of more significance and more permanence in our system than a change of government could bring about.

I believe this is an urgent question for the House to consider both in relation to appointments to senior levels of the public service and to the growing power of the