

to go down. I would tell my friends across the way that we are also fortunate to have in our Party the only psychiatrist in the House. He told me the other day that he has nothing to do so I suggested we would be pleased to have him assist my friends on the other side. I think all of this is indicative of the experience, background, indeed the diversity our Party brings to the House of Commons. The people of Canada knew when they sent us here in September, 1984, that they wanted a representative group of people and we are very fortunate to have such a broad background of experience in our Party. I think it is reflected in the legislation we bring forward.

I know that what I am about to say is not exactly pertinent to the Bill but I want to get it out. During the last two elections in that great democracy to the south only about 53 per cent of the voters got out to the polls. In this country on September 4, 1984, because of the great interest in the election and because the people wanted to send Members with a broad background of experience to the House of Commons, we had a 75 per cent turn-out. That speaks to the fact that we in this country are very aware of the democratic process.

With specific reference to the Bill, what my friend is trying to do is extend the present provisions in the Canada Elections Act which speak specifically to that period of time when one is declaring oneself as a candidate for a nomination, running for the nomination and then running for election. I think we all agree with the provision presently in place. There is no question that every candidate should have the freedom to run for a seat in Parliament without the threat that his or her job would disappear for any reason whatsoever while doing so. We all agree with that because we all know what we went through when we ran for election. The last thing in the world you need is for someone to be saying: "I just moved into your job yesterday; what will you be doing if you do not make it?" No one needs that kind of grief along with all the other things we have to contend with in an election.

The question then becomes whether or not this provision should be extended in an open-ended fashion as my friend suggests so that the job is there forever. I suggest that would be an untenable extension of this provision. I would also suggest that the Canada Elections Act is pretty generous. I pay tribute to those who passed that Act originally, no matter what Party they represented. I think it speaks to democracy in that it allows anyone who wants to the opportunity to contest a nomination and run for a seat in this House. However, should employers be forced to keep that position open while that Member stays in the House of Commons? It could be for 10 or 15 years. Should the employer have to promote people and tell them that there could be a general election next year and if so-and-so does not make it, they will be right back in his job? Should employers have to do that? More important, perhaps, should employees be forced to operate in that iffy situation? They would not know whether the job to which they have been promoted, one in which they are working hard, will be taken back by someone after an election defeat. Perhaps it would not even be a defeat, simply that the Member decided to retire.

### *Canada Elections Act*

I suggest we might bring some criticism down on ourselves if we were to vote such a provision into law. We receive enough criticism as it is concerning our positions as Members of Parliament. Ask yourself if you want to put yourself in the position of guaranteeing that a job stay open and run the risk that criticism will fall on all of us henceforth. I think it would do an injustice to the other employees of a limited number of enterprises to which this provision applies, since they have the right to expect a promotion and advancement on the basis of their service and experience. To have someone else then come back and insert themselves in their career path could be seen as unfair.

I would also suggest that quite reasonable steps have been taken to ease the return of Members of Parliament to a job or professional occupation after we leave here. We all support this. It is not easy to defend yourself in this area because no one likes to talk about how much they make and those kinds of things. However, being politicians our salaries and other benefits are public knowledge. The House will know that after six years of service Members become eligible for a pension. They pay for this pension during their service in the House. It helps to ease the transition to another job or occupation.

Now, I would like to go back to what I said to my friend from Cochrane-Superior. There is no question that there are some risks in the practice of law. My former partners keep telling me: "Lewis, you have changed all the laws on us. The place is confused. The practice of law is not what it used to be". By inference I would have a great deal of difficulty catching up. I know that my client base has gone to other lawyers in my former firm and to other professionals in the City of Orillia. I know that close relationships with business contacts other than clients are gone because, being here five days a week, one cannot maintain that same relationship.

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I know that it is not possible to pick up where you left off when practising law. The same applies to so many of the professions or occupations. I say this not only on the basis of keeping the job open, but also on the basis of the individual. How many of us would expect to step back into our previous occupation or profession at the same level of competence and familiarity? I think we would be kidding ourselves if we said we could. I think we all realize that we would lose something. No matter how good we were when we left that position, after five or 10 years here we would be kidding ourselves if we said that we could go back and pick up all the traces without missing a few steps. I think it is unreasonable from that standpoint also.

The Management and Members' Services Committee has recently tabled a report which looks after the same thing as the pension which I referred to is looking after. That is, it suggests that there be a salary paid for a period of six months after a Member ceases to serve in the House. I think that is understandable too. I, personally, would support that as a severance pay which would give one a chance to say: "Yes, I worked hard for my riding right up to the day of the election and then