

Civil Service Act

(Text):

Mr. Herridge: You are a bit optimistic, old boy; I have not finished yet. Mr. Chairman, I wish to quote from page 188. This is a chapter entitled, "The political rights and social interests of civil servants". Professor Laski says:

I should like to begin by saying at once that the report of the Masterman committee seems to me a woeful and timid document, built on a distrust of the honesty and loyalty of many hundred thousand civil servants who have given many years' proof that this distrust is utterly without justification.

This report was rather timid with respect to granting political rights to civil servants, but that situation has since changed.

Mr. Brunsten: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Herridge: Yes.

Mr. Brunsten: The hon. member used the term "social rights". Will the hon. member define those rights? We understand political rights, but what are social rights?

Mr. Herridge: I think those are very easily described. They are all those rights which any Canadian citizen is entitled to enjoy in our society. I do not resent the intervention of the hon. member for Medicine Hat because it gives him the opportunity to make one of his infrequent speeches.

The author of this book goes on to say:

Above all, I believe it is a great mistake to separate the vast majority of officials from work in local government where, very often, their experience of administration would enable them to make an important contribution to the standards of administration.

In Great Britain and other western European countries, civil servants, that is, servants of the federal or state government, shall we say, take a very active part in politics at municipal and other levels. The author says:

In the French system, a great many civil servants, of whom, perhaps the best known among those living is that eminent humanist, Mr. Leon Blum—

Of course, Mr. Blum has died since this was written.

—have played their part in politics without any deterioration in their work; and I have known scores of lesser cases in which the official's political affiliation was both active and known without producing the conviction that he would not be loyal to a minister whose convictions were of a different school.

That is the sort of thing we have to learn in this country. We have to recognize that right, and have that trust. Mr. Laski goes on to say:

Perhaps I may summarize this by saying that when an official has strong political opinions he could not conceal them from anyone but the most stupid of ministers—

I hope they are listening over there.

—for more than the first hour of their relationship, and the real question was, and is, granted those convictions was he capable of looking at the minister's views with detachment and of helping him to apply them with the full energy of his mind. The answer is sometimes yes, and sometimes no. Sir Austen Chamberlain, in his autobiography, tells an admirable story of the permanent secretary of the post office—

That is the same as our deputy minister.

—when he was postmaster general. They quarrelled violently over a decision Sir Austen proposed to make until at last he told his official that he had made up his mind that the decision stood. Thereupon, Sir Austen tells us, his permanent secretary said, "Well, postmaster general, if you want to make a damned fool of yourself, I cannot prevent you from doing so. But at least I can show you how to do it with the least possible damage to the country".

My, what a lot members of the government could learn from that attitude toward public life.

That is what I mean by loyalty and detachment, and I think they are qualities quite distinct from political convictions and party preferences.

Then the author goes on:

First, it is clear that all members of the administrative class should impose upon themselves a self denying ordinance in the political sphere. They ought to resign if they want to be candidates for parliament. They ought not to make political speeches. They ought not to write books or articles on the immediate issues of political controversy. They are too near the centre of power to do any of these things.

That is the practice in Great Britain. Administrative officials do not take part in politics. Apart from members of the administration class, officials can run for election, attach themselves to the party which they adopt, make speeches and take part in political campaigns. Then, continuing, Mr. Laski says:

Assuming that the average civil servant observes the normal decencies of political behaviour, I am unable to believe that the liberation of the grades below the administrative would shock any public opinion or do any harm to the work of the department.

I have quoted these extracts from this very interesting book to indicate the opinion of a man who is very well versed in politics and the principles which ought to be applied to the administration of the civil service. I believe we have to think along these lines. We have to do more in this country to recognize the rights of our civil servants in this respect. We have to trust them more. In Great Britain I have had the opportunity to meet a number of civil servants of high rank and a number of civil servants of lower rank. There is a spirit of confidence in their democratic principles, a spirit of confidence in civil service loyalty over and beyond political opinions which makes it possible for the