

with the two I have raised, there has not been ample time to go into them in any depth.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, it is important to debate Bill C-26, because of the implications it will have on the Public Service. It is important to discuss it from a number of points of view.

One point of view is what it does not do, and the other is what it does do. This bill does not address the real problems within the Public Service of Canada but addresses some concerns the government believes it has because of its inability to treat employees properly in the operation of government service.

We have heard a good deal today about the discretion this bill will provide to managers. That sort of discretion will permit and even encourage favouritism to be used rather than merit in the operation of the Public Service. It is no wonder that the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the other unions and professional associations that represent workers in the Public Service are very concerned about the operation of this bill. They are very concerned about the rationale and motives the government brings to the introduction of a bill of this sort.

There are at least three major problems within the Public Service which this bill does not even attempt to address. If the government were serious about improving the Public Service and the lives of those employees within it, it would do something to address these concerns.

There is a serious problem of morale within the Public Service, as we have seen from the events of last summer and as all members of Parliament see when we meet members of the Public Service. This bill does not attempt to address the problem of low morale.

There is also concern out there among the employees and the public at large that the service rendered to the public has deteriorated considerably over the last few years. Those of us who deal with a large number of unemployment insurance claims in our offices, or with Revenue Canada, know that the period of time to deal with these issues has grown. In that period of time the lives of Canadians are affected in an adverse manner. We have problems with the deterioration of service to

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the public, not as a result of problems with the employees who are doing the best job they can, but because of continual cutbacks and pressure on the resources within the Public Service.

There are problems, as we have seen so vividly recently with the collective bargaining process within the Public Service. There are many issues which the Public Service Alliance of Canada is unable to bargain which would be the subject of collective bargaining were they not in the Public Service. They are reasonable matters such as job classification and staffing levels. Again Bill C-26 omits to do anything about this particular problem. Instead the bill encourages and allows the government to continue to contract out work, to continue to undermine the full-time employees in the Public Service.

The government now spends in excess of \$5 billion on contracting out. There is no effective accounting for this expenditure and no cost study available to the members of the House on the effectiveness of this contracting out. It would appear to be more of a philosophical issue than a practical economic issue.

This bill does nothing to address this concern. Indeed, it allows the government to contract out even more, which is not in the interests of the employees in the Public Service or of the consumers of services provided by civil servants.

It also increases the discretion of managers in the deployment of staff. One big problem with giving managers extra discretion in the way in which they treat employees is that they will use favouritism rather than merit to address their concerns. One of the advantages of having firm rules with regard to promotion and allocation of jobs is that it cuts down on the opportunity for managers to pick and choose who will get merit, who will be deployed to certain tasks, and so on, on the basis of who they like rather than who will do the best job.

The discretion of managers, if administered fairly, is desirable. Within the Public Service at the moment, as we all know, there is an increasing distrust by the rank and file members of their managers and part of that is the frustration that gave rise to the events of last summer.