

*Government Orders*

Bill C-26 states that the Treasury Board may request the Public Service Commission to implement employment equity programs. The Employment Equity Act is in place because for other organizations may is not good enough. What if the Treasury Board does not feel like implementing this kind of program? What if it decides that anti-discriminatory legislation is not cost effective?

The government insists that other employers must not discriminate. I insist that they must place the same responsibility on themselves.

This bill increases opportunities for discriminatory practices even further by absolutely removing the merit principle as the basic precept of hiring and advancement. According to the bill jobs will now go to a qualified candidate instead of the most qualified candidate.

Try as I might, I cannot think of a rationale for this clause other than a blatant opportunity to facilitate political patronage. What private sector employee would interview a number of candidates for a job and then choose the second or third best because that person was capable of doing adequate, if not very good, work.

The merit principle is already severely eroded despite legislation that demands it. What kind of Public Service will we have and what kind of morale will there be when all our government employees are second best?

At the moment some of the discriminatory practices allowed for in the bill would be controlled by the Public Service Commission. It was established in 1919 as the Civil Service Commission, to prevent management abuse and ensure fair treatment to employees, particularly concerning hiring.

The Public Service Commission will be transformed by this bill from a watch-dog to a lap-dog. Many of its personnel functions will be weakened or removed. According to the bill, the PSC will no longer have any role in the demotion or termination of employees.

That task will be in the hands of deputy ministers and the Treasury Board. Bill C-26 will deprive the PSC of any strength and independence that it now has. When Public Service Commission powers decrease the powers of the individual managers will increase.

I am sure that most managers in the Public Service perform to the best of their ability and do their jobs with

integrity, but what of the ones who do not? The bill will give managers sole responsibility for so many personnel practices. Deputy ministers will hire and fire. They will deploy people as they see fit. There will be no means of redress.

The government has proudly asserted that deployment, although regulated by managers, will be voluntary. How voluntary will it be when deployment can be included as a term of employment?

By leaving the primary personnel responsibilities in the hands of individual managers, the bill will pave the way to favouritism on the one hand and harassment on the other.

The stated rationale by this government for this change in hiring policies within the Public Service is that simplification is needed. At the moment, it often takes as long as six months to fill a Public Service position.

The government claims that competitions are costly and time consuming. Yet only 12 per cent of the government's operating budget is devoted to personnel. There is no question that government hiring processes need simplification, but removal of the merit principle is not the way to achieve that result.

To fully ensure that Public Service employees will have absolutely no power, the government is also using the bill to enfeeble the unions.

Bill C-26 will deny the unions the right to negotiate such issues as classification and promotion. Perhaps even more dangerous, the government has appropriated for itself the right to eliminate the right to strike for certain people in certain positions.

Initially this action may indeed weaken the unions so that they cannot speak out against abuses within the system. However, in the long run it will create a monster. By designating significant numbers of employees as ineligible to strike, the government will place union control firmly in the hands of young, inexperienced and probably more radical employees. At the lowest rungs of the government ladder, with nothing to lose, these new leaders will have no reason to compromise with the government that put them in such an unfortunate position.

The bill will also severely damage job security. Contracting out has become commonplace. The bill would