

Private Members' Business

leave of absence for that purpose and then go back to the Public Service. That happens now. I think it functions reasonably well.

I do not know whether there are practical problems that exist in that field, but that particular mechanism appears to serve public servants well now. It serves MPs, ministers and other functionaries in the House of Commons, but this bill goes much further than that.

It provides an additional privilege to employees of MPs in the House of Commons to seek secure employment with the Public Service immediately following their employment with an MP.

I want to address one context in which this bill should be seen. That is the attempt by the government now to radically change and update the Public Service. It flies by the name Public Service 2000. In that process, there has been shown clearly to be a real need on the part of the government to consult more broadly with the Public Service. It has failed to do that.

I am of the view that we in the House of Commons, while desiring very much to be fair to our employees and to be fair to the Public Service, should not be undertaking a wedge mechanism such as this bill without consulting extensively with the Public Service Commission and the employee associations and unions that operate there.

That is one significant omission in terms of this bill and within the context of reform within the Public Service. It is a shame that that has not occurred. I know there are some who would say: "Let us send this bill to committee and work with it from there", but I believe very firmly that the bill should have started with a base of consultation and then moved into the House of Commons. The New Democratic Party member who proposed this amendment has failed to do so, oddly enough, with the Public Service sector and the union sector. It is an unfortunate omission.

As a result, we commend positive consultative initiatives in Public Service 2000. Perhaps some day in the future this might be addressed. This is a mechanism which perhaps should be addressed in the future, but we on this side of the House feel that we cannot support it at this time.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I am a little concerned about my party's

position on this bill. I can remember when we were in power from 1980 to 1984. I can also remember many good, hard working and loyal people. They did not work for ministers. I was fortunate. I worked for a Prime Minister. However, there were many good people who worked for members of Parliament. When we were not returned to office, naturally many of these assistants to members of Parliament were out on the street.

When a new government takes power and you go and knock on the door of the member of Parliament, first you are asked for your c.v. If you said "I am Dennis Mills. I worked in the Langevin Block for four years and would like to work in your office, Mr. Paproski"—I should say you would be one of the exceptions, Mr. Speaker—I can tell you right now you would be out of business.

This bill is a good one in that it encourages people to work for members of Parliament. It is almost an incentive. I would like to see people have experience with members of Parliament before they even qualify to enter the Public Service. That is the real test as to whether or not a person has the endurance, the courage, the passion, and the commitment to put up with what is required to do the work that we have to do in this House, in committees, and in other places.

I am nervous that reverse discrimination will develop if we do not support this bill. In 1984 many of my friends were good, hard working public servants who happened to work in members' offices, providing secretarial, support services, et cetera. However, because they were with the Liberal government at that time they were not given the opportunity to work on the government side. There is a natural element of trust involved here. If Chrysler advertising uses one firm, Ford does not tend to use the same one. That is just a basic, practical fact of life.

• (1320)

This bill, as I understand it, relates to persons who have served members of Parliament well. Obviously members of Parliament would not keep the person around for three years if they were not doing a good job. Working for a member of Parliament, especially in opposition, is certainly not nine to five, Monday to Friday. It is a tough job. We can never thank members of our support staff enough for the extra time and hours they put in.