

Private Members' Business

votable bill. In other words, if members of the House of Commons choose to do so, after three hours of debate I believe a vote could be conducted wherein all members of the House could participate in that vote on whether or not this private member's bill should be adopted by the whole House or referred to committee. That to me is a clear indication of the broad all-party support there is behind this notion of fairness.

Someone at that committee asked me for two or three reasons why I thought this bill should be adopted and why staff of the offices of members of Parliament is not granted the same rights as staff in minister's offices and in the office of the Leader of the Opposition.

The explanation for that is that when the amendments were made to the existing legislation a number of years ago, members of Parliament did not have their own staff. Members of Parliament at that time drew upon a common pool of employees that the House of Commons provided. Members did not have at that time the existing arrangement where we have our own staff assigned to us by the House of Commons or we have the right to hire staff in our own offices and at the constituency level. That simply did not exist at that time.

I am sure if it had existed at that time that we would not be faced with the problem that we have today. In other words, if members of Parliament had been given the right at that time to have their own staff, they would have been included in the amendments to the legislation at that time.

The number of people we are talking about here that could possibly be affected by this legislation I have determined to be in the area of between 35 and 50 people once in a four-year period. According to the information I have in each election there may be a turnover in members of Parliament of about 100. In other words, there may be 100 members who decide either not to seek re-election again or who may be defeated, and so we have a 100 or so new members of Parliament after each election.

According to information I have received from other sources, it is expected that most of those staff individuals would be employed by incoming members of Parliament, or they may choose for whatever reason not to stay on the Hill and seek employment elsewhere, and that by

experience over the years there would probably be in the area of about 35 to 50 experienced people on the Hill who may not be able to find employment.

I say all this because I think we have to be realistic about what would be the impact of this private member's bill on the Public Service of Canada. Essentially what we are looking at is that the bill would probably affect between 30 to 50 people once every four years or so, following an election. The individuals could not just walk into the Public Service. They would need three years of service in the office of a member of Parliament. They would need the skills and other requirements of the job to be considered for hiring into the Public Service. They would receive a priority consideration, however, and I think it would be of value to the Canadian Public Service to have people who have the degree of skill that is earned by working for members of Parliament. It would be of continuing value to the Public Service.

It should not by any measure be considered as another perk of one kind or another. They are skills that people have learned by working on the Hill that could continue to be utilized in the public good in Canada.

• (1810)

Therefore, as I said at the outset, I have no intention of speaking for 20 minutes. I think there is broad general support for this concept. I recognize that there are some weaknesses in the language in the original bill as it was drafted in 1984. I would be prepared to work with the committee to strengthen the language in the bill. I would hope that we could perhaps have some witnesses from the Public Service unions, even some members of the staff of members of the House of Commons, and any others who may be interested in having some input into making the bill say what it is we mean it to say.

I would simply say I would enjoy appearing before that committee to lend any assistance I could on what I would consider to be a truly non-partisan, non-private member's bill that you have before you today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dave Worthy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs) and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill that has been introduced by the hon. member for Beaches—Woodbine.