

*Employment in Public Service*

32. Like the hon. member for Carleton, I am still very disappointed at the fact that the bill before us only grants partial political rights to public service employees. In the special joint committee I moved an amendment, as recorded in the minutes of proceedings of the committee, No. 26, at pages 1223, 1224 and 1225, in which I attempted to divide the public service into two general groups, the first one consisting of deputy heads, chief executive officers and persons employed in a managerial or confidential capacity as defined in the bill we have just passed. While I did not agree entirely with the idea I must say I was prepared, for the sake of getting somewhere, to make the concession that in those classes of employees anyone wishing to be a candidate for provincial or federal office should seek the permission of the Public Service Commission before doing so. I think there is an argument in favour of that proposition.

I also suggested in my amendment, seconded of course by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, certain prohibitions against certain activities. For example, one of them was that no employee, as defined, or other person employed in the public service should ever do anything which would associate his position in the public service with any political activity in which he was engaged. I was prepared to agree also that members of the public service should desist from speaking in public or expressing their views in writing over their signature on behalf of any candidate or political party, unless of course a person was himself a candidate, so that there could be no possibility of the public service, or of a department or division of the public service, becoming publicly associated with a certain opinion or political view.

As a third concession in this field I was prepared to agree, if other members had agreed with the general proposition, that no political activity of any kind should be undertaken on behalf of a candidate during working hours, or even during non-working hours, on the premises of the employer, so that offices and other places where public service employees are engaged in work would not become centres of political discussion or activity.

With those safeguards which I have enumerated, namely, that the top people in the public service—I am speaking here of top people in terms of function and not necessarily of quality—cannot be candidates for provincial or federal office without getting the

permission of the Public Service Commission, and a safeguard against activities on the premises or outside the premises during working hours of a kind that might blur the line between the duties of the public service employee and his political opinions, I cannot for the life of me see why an ordinary public servant, such as a stenographer, a clerk, an engineer, a draftsman, postal worker, or a prevailing rate employee such as an electrician, carpenter or machinist should not be able to run for any party for which he in his judgment decides, without having to obtain permission to do so from the Public Service Commission. I do not see why he should be put to the humiliation of not being able to exercise ordinary political rights. He would not be a person exercising managerial or confidential functions in the public service, he would not be a policy-making or even a policy-advising person in most cases; he would be a functionary carrying out sometimes very routine functions.

I do not see why such an employee should not have the right to be a candidate after having gone to the Public Service Commission and automatically obtained leave of absence without pay for the duration of the campaign. If he were elected he would cease to be an employee of the public service but if he were defeated he could go back to the job if it were available to him or to some other comparable job. I cannot see any reason for denying that right to the ordinary public service employee—by that I mean the vast majority of public service employees—who are not in the managerial or confidential category.

I certainly cannot understand why members of the government and members of the Liberal party in the committee—I also understand there is likely to be opposition on the floor of this house—objected to the simple proposition that public service employees should be permitted to be members of political parties.

At the present time the bill allows them to make contributions to the funds of a political party or candidate. It allows them to attend political meetings and presumably to speak at them. It allows them to seek to become candidates for federal or provincial office but in my view—and this is a matter of the legal interpretation of words—it does not allow them to take out a membership card in a political party. In most cases that will mean, of course, that they cannot become candidates. I understand that some parties in this