

Government Orders

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, if I could just comment. Of course I am disappointed that the government cannot see the merit of its own previous arguments on matters such as these.

I would ask you to consider one point that has been raised by both of my colleagues on the government side. That is to acquaint the scope of the bill with the size and the length of it and the number of pages. I think that is an entirely inappropriate consideration. We all know that the scope of the bill is not necessarily related to the volume of paper it contains. A bill could be of the absolute maximum scope conceivable and be extremely short. Likewise we had a very thick bill in this Parliament on the income tax amendments which was actually quite narrow in scope. It is the scope of the bill rather than the size that is important.

• (1020)

I put it once again that this bill touches on a wide range of areas of public policy, what would normally fall in the purview of several House committees to look at.

I would also point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that if you examine carefully the arguments of the government members on the tests of the relatedness of these subject matters that the only relation the government has really pointed to is the fact that they are, broadly speaking, all part of the government's legislative agenda. I submit to you that that is not an adequate test of their relationship and their relevance to each other.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair would like to thank all three members for their thoughtful interventions on this matter. In fact, the severance issue as it is called has been argued in courts many times. The lawyers in the House will know that. We have all argued it often in court, usually in matters of criminal charges. It is an issue which is most important.

The references that were made by the various members with which this chair occupant is familiar and the matters will all be considered carefully. Unfortunately it is going to take more than an instant to give a proper ruling on the matter.

We have had many omnibus bills in the past in this House. The bill will therefore have to proceed and if close examination is made a ruling will be made on it further down the trail, so to speak.

For the time being the bill will proceed and I would call on the hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, one of the many groups of Canadians that are affected by Bill C-17 is the Public Service of Canada. When we came to power we found the public service under considerable stress. We have already started the rebuilding process and by the end of our

mandate we expect the public service will have recovered its full ability to serve Canadians.

The wage and increment freeze which was announced in the budget is a difficult but necessary measure. The freeze which ensures that \$1 billion can be booked in the fiscal framework to be reached in the year 1996-97 is something I recognize that public service employees will not welcome with open arms. But, frankly, we are freezing salaries to save jobs.

This government also announced in the budget an efficiency in program review aimed at reducing the cost of government. How that is connected is that if we find enough savings to meet the reduced departmental expenditure targets, we can apply the additional efficiency savings to reducing the length of the wage freeze.

Though the cool reception of many union leaders to the freeze of wages and increments announced in the budget is certainly understandable, I want to place our actions in perspective and show that we have been as fair as we could be to the public service in the present circumstances. I am confident that public service employees will accept this budget, especially when they understand the sacrifices that we are asking all Canadians, other groups of Canadians, to accept as well.

[Translation]

Most Canadians do not suspect how much they owe their quality of life to the employees of the Public Service of Canada. Let me give you three examples of the contribution of public servants to Canadians' welfare.

[English]

For more than 150 years members of the Geological Survey of Canada, using them as an example, have mapped the mineral resources of this country. This year and in future years commercial exploration will take place and new mines will open because of the work that is being done now by these public service employees.

• (1025)

Canada, as we well know and appreciate and as I have said many times, has just about the most respected police force in the world. Indeed, it is a national symbol. Everywhere Canadians are safer because of the work of policemen and policewomen of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Every Canadian who flies in this country as we all do benefits from a network of services that the Government of Canada has developed and maintains. The maps used to fly the planes, the air traffic controllers that guide them through the air, the weather warning systems, all come from the public service.

The organizations and people working for government are too diverse for any less to do justice to them. In addition to the people I have just mentioned, the examples I have given, are