

hand and offer us a generous, substantial emolument for the rest of our lives, unless perchance, we might land in the upper chamber. Most of us, however, leave our callings, enter political life and take our chances. Generally speaking, therefore, it is only fair that the gentleman or lady who leaves some other calling and becomes private secretary to a minister, should, when the minister ceases to be such, take his or her chances just as the rest of us have to do.

Mr. HACKETT: The hon. member for Kindersley has apparently overlooked the red chamber.

Mr. CARMICHAEL: I mentioned that.

Mr. HACKETT: Members of this house have been known to retire there and not without some satisfaction to themselves. I would like, however, to bring the remarks of the hon. gentleman to this test. Is there an abuse? I suggest that this change should not be made unless it is to cure an abuse. Is there a man in the civil service who has been a private secretary who is unfitted and does not possess the qualifications for the position in the service which he now holds? If, as suggested by the hon. member for Ottawa, the definition of merit is not sufficiently broad to measure merit in its true sense, I think it should be amended. In any event I move, Mr. Chairman, seconded by the hon. member for East Algoma, that section 11 be deleted.

Mr. PECK: There is just one point that does not seem to have yet been considered, and that is the effect upon the present private secretaries. It seems to me that if we adopt the section as it stands it is going to deprive the existing private secretaries of the benefits they have a right to receive under the present law. So if we pass this section I think it should be only on the understanding that it does not take away from the present private secretaries the rights which they now have. These men and women have been appointed under a certain law, and they knew when they received their appointments that having served for a certain period they would be taken care of in the civil service. They have remained as private secretaries on that understanding. So I repeat, Mr. Chairman, that if this section is going to pass, it should be only on the understanding that those who are now occupying the position of private secretary shall have the benefit of the existing law. In other words, that this section be amended so as not to apply to existing private secretaries.

Mr. CHEVRIER: There is one word that I want to say on this amendment, and it is

as to what is meant by the merit system. The merit system, as I understand it, is not the merit of the man who is trying to get into the service. The merit system is the system that finds the man best fitted for the position, then appoints him and protects him until his retirement, and sees that he is treated in an equitable manner. That, as I understand it, is the merit system. It is not the merit of the man outside trying to get into the service. If this amendment is carried, the meritorious employee will be deprived of the right of promotion, and therefore the merit system will suffer an encroachment. I think that those members of the house who feel that the merit system is the only one, and I am one of those, Mr. Chairman, who feel that the merit system is the only proper system for the administration of the civil service, cannot vote in any other way except against the amendment.

Mr. GAGNON: I would like to say one word, and that is that I gladly support the amendment which has been moved by the hon. member for Stanstead. According to the information I have, only about five or six private secretaries would be affected by the bill as it now stands, because most of the private secretaries have been taken from the service already. But the private secretaries who were appointed in July or August, 1930, entered the service on the understanding that should their ministers abandon their office for one reason or another they would be given a position in the civil service. Why should we be so strict, speaking about abuses and that sort of thing, when there are only about five or six private secretaries who are eligible to enter the service and why should we deprive them of an acquired right to be appointed to the service?

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): I rise to a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: I would point out to the hon. member for Stanstead that there cannot be any amendment to strike out a section.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): That was my point, Mr. Chairman, exactly.

The CHAIRMAN: The point is well taken.

Mr. CHEVRIER: In answer to the hon. member for Dorchester, it does not make a bit of difference if there is only one private secretary to be absorbed into the service. That would be a sufficient encroachment on the merit system to warrant us in carrying this section as it stands.