

the Public Service is run, our administration could continue to be considered one of the best in the world.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I salute my colleague for a well delivered speech. She touched on a lot of points that I agree with. One specific thing that she referred to in her speech which I am not concerned about is political patronage. Very few people in this country understand that political patronage is practically non-existent in this country. It is a myth. Most Canadians think it is the politicians who decide who will fill most of the senior positions in the Government of Canada and in the Crown corporations. That is a myth.

My concern is the real patronage that exists in the Government of Canada, the bureaucratic patronage. This is one thing I remember from 1980 to 1984 when I worked across the street in the Langevin Block with Mr. Trudeau. People used to accuse us all the time of political patronage. I could not believe how wrong those accusations were. Really, the bureaucrats had more of a patronage operation than anyone could ever have imagined. In her speech the member said that this bill is going to minimize, improve or reduce a lot of that bureaucratic patronage. I wonder if the member can explain how she feels this bill will do that. If such is the case, it is an aspect of this bill that I would personally support.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gibeau: I would like to thank my colleague for his question which, as usual, is a very practical question and is not tinged with partisanship.

The objective and the spirit of the reform proposed in this legislation is to give back to bureaucrats and civil servants the power to make decisions and their pride in being public servants. I would almost say that our government, our system, has the best methods in North America, if not the western world, for choosing the most qualified people. We have wonderful tools, tests and procedures for selecting the best person. Unfortunately, some of our administrative policies meant that those qualified people, once they had been selected, were subject to arbitrary processes that kept them from using their skills. Through the more relaxed and simplified

Government Orders

measures that we want to implement with the bill we are presenting today, we want to eliminate the red tape and enable those people to fully use their skills and not be subjected once again to old bureaucratic laws that go back 25 years. Of course, these laws were amended over the years, with new clauses, measures, conditions, et cetera, but they always made it possible for someone to beat the system. The object of this initiative is to give back to people the responsibilities and authority that go with their level. That is the first objective.

The second objective is certainly to make decisions on collective bargaining, the selection process and customer service more open. Once again, as we were saying earlier, the objective is not to satisfy the needs of the government, nor is it to satisfy the needs of the union or the public service. The objective is to make sure that our citizens, our constituents, do not have to go from one department to another and put up with undue frustrations because the system is too cumbersome. I personally experienced those frustrations when I was elected to the House of Commons and saw how cumbersome and hard to penetrate the government administration is, because it is complicated and there are little empires. For instance, in many departments, a small group looks after women, another one looks after native people, and yet another one looks after the disabled. We could certainly together with the Public Service—because there are also bright people there who know how the system could be improved—ensure that our constituents, citizens and the Canadian people are provided with top-quality services.

In some countries, it is an honour to be part of the public service. Unfortunately here in Canada there is too often a tendency, not to ridicule civil servants, but not to give them their due recognition because of the bureaucratic system. That is exactly what Bill C-26, which is tabled today, is about. I thank the member for the question.

[*English*]

Mr. Mills: I thank the member for that answer. I think she has hit upon something very important here. The principle is correct, but I am not sure that there is a mechanism to check to see whether or not the principle of fairness is going to be implemented.