

Public Service Publications

perhaps hyperbole I have used, I would suggest that the public interest would be better served with a greater amount of openness.

I believe that in dealing with governments on some issues, because of the sort of cloak of confidentiality with which we surround ourselves the public becomes terribly frustrated. I have found that generally speaking the public will accept a person, warts, mistakes and all if he is honest and open with them. But what people do not accept is one more in a routine series of form letters cranked out by some computer giving a routine answer to a question which affects the individual citizen very much indeed. What sustains the existing practice of limited disclosure, I suggest, are outdated constitutional doctrines and a desire by the government to do its business in private without being put to the trouble of full explanation.

With great respect to the public service I would say there is bureaucratic inertia about facing this issue. I am sure, however, that many people in the public service would like to see the results of their studies receive much more public debate and, not less important—I have to admit this—consideration by an efficient and fair government. With that contribution, I say it is a great pleasure to support the hon. member's bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Fernand-E. Leblanc (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), sponsor of Bill C-19, entitled "An Act respecting employment with the Government of Canada not covered by the Public Service Employment Act" wanted to remain as objective as possible.

He often mentioned that his purpose was objectivity and not criticism of expenses, and he feels that this list, as now published, does not adequately meet the requirements of the population, of journalists, or of some politicians.

The hon. member spoke for a few minutes particularly of increased expenses in the office of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I remember that a few years ago, when I was Chairman of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, the Treasury Board estimates were referred to the committee. On that occasion, we fully discussed the people who, on a contract basis or otherwise, worked for the Prime Minister's office. We supplied, at that time, a complete list of employees, with their remunerations and appropriate comments. If the hon. member had had the opportunity of attending some of the committee meetings during which the expenses of the Prime Minister's office were examined, he could readily have obtained all explanations deemed necessary to make sure that government funds are being properly used.

It can however be wondered why expenses of the Prime Minister's office have been increasing since 1968 and specifically since the election of the present Prime Minister. For him it is a matter of trying to instill "participatory democracy" into the people.

An hon. Member: Oh, oh!

[Mr. Fairweather.]

Mr. Leblanc (Laurier): A Créditiste laughs at that, but we are in fact engaged in participatory democracy. Surely there must one Créditiste in the House—no, there are two!

The present Prime Minister wanted the people to participate in the administration of the government and because of this he receives more communications, letters, briefs than any of his predecessors ever received. Naturally, there is more work than can be done by one person; that is why, at the present time, the Prime Minister must hire additional personnel to answer his voluminous correspondence and also to attend to the proper operation of his office. The people surely expect the office of the Prime Minister to be managed in an orderly fashion and that experts supply the requested information.

On the other hand, it is also true that some of my constituents do write directly to the Prime Minister's office and send me, later on, a copy of their letters. I personally know that many people in my riding are writing to the Prime Minister.

Concerning the reviewing of expenses I have just mentioned, it was very easy to check those of the Prime Minister's office or of any department, since the explanatory note of Bill C-19 reads as follows:

The purpose of this bill is to provide information to the public what contracts of employment are entered into by the office of the Prime Minister or by government departments.

However, the title of the bill itself refers to "Employment with the Government of Canada" and I wonder whether the words "Employment with the Government of Canada" could not be more widely construed than in the explanatory note.

• (1740)

We could include in the same bill the persons hired by the Speaker of the House of Commons, as the secretaries of the members, the staff of the protection service, pages and messengers who do not come under the public service. The list of such employees and their wages is not disclosed.

We could also apply that bill to the personnel hired by the Speaker of the Senate who also has prerogatives as well as to the staff of government agencies and to the Crown corporations.

Indeed, I wonder if even the manpower centres could not also publish every month a list of the many individuals for whom they find employment and if the interpretation of the explanatory note given by the member for Winnipeg North is right or whether the bill under consideration gives to the term "Government of Canada" a general meaning, because we would then have to include all the positions which I mentioned and probably many others.

I should like to state, by the way, that I am fully confident in the Public Service Commission and that I do not believe that it should have to publish each month the list of vacancies it fills. I want to pay tribute to the Public Service Commission which, for the past four years, has been appearing before the committee which I have the honour to preside. All questions are always answered in a satisfactory manner. Furthermore, the commission itself is well managed by competent commissioners who know