

We are especially appreciative of the work our executive assistants and other assistants do. They operate at a senior level, working with senior public officials through our committee system here in the House of Commons and in dealing with Ministers and so on. I do not think Members' assistants are accorded anywhere near the respect or prominence they should be. This is true as well of the wages paid them. An assistant to a Member of Parliament receives a certain level of pay. A person working for the staff of the House of Commons, say for the Clerk at the Table, will get 30 per cent or 40 per cent more in wages. I think Members are very conscious of this. They would like to see the same kind of assistance accorded to assistants of MPs as is provided to the staff of Ministers with regard to this provision in the existing Public Service Employment Act. The PSE Act provides that Ministers' assistants can have a priority entry into the Public Service after three years of employment. I think that is why the recommendation has come forward from the Members' Services Committee.

There are a couple of questions which should be considered. As far as Ministers' assistants are concerned, that special privilege is only accorded to executive assistants, special assistants, and private secretaries, as I understand it. Employees at a lower staff level can be accorded this priority after three years only if they have been in the Public Service previously to coming on staff with a Minister. There are a number of questions in that regard. I do not believe the Government has canvassed this Bill to the extent it needs it before giving it second reading. I do know that around the House of Commons there is a great deal of support and encouragement for this Bill.

I would like to suggest to the House this afternoon that perhaps, if there is agreement, we could send the subject matter of Bill C-215 to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates so that it can be more fully canvassed with regard to the implications for employment, its relationship *vis-à-vis* Members' staffs, and the relationship of the Ministers' staffs with the Public Service unions and so on. Therefore, I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans):

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Public Services Employment Act (staff of Members of the House of Commons) be not now read a second time but that the Order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

● (1750)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Foster, seconded by Mr. Evans, moved an amendment thereto, that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

Bill C-215, an Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (staff of Members of the House of Commons), be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

Public Service Employment Act

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the following amendment to the amendment, seconded by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow):

That the said committee submit a report to the House of Commons within a period of 10 days.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) would be patient for a moment, the Chair will consider the subamendment.

Mr. Young, seconded by Mr. Orlikow, moved an amendment to the amendment that the said committee submit a report to the House of Commons within a period of 10 days.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the amendment as Chairman of the Committee, and I will be very brief. I would like to ask for the co-operation of the Hon. Member and his Party and of the Official Opposition. If they can pass Bill C-24 through committee in a short time, I would be more than happy to deal with this matter expeditiously. The question is that we have 11 witnesses scheduled for tomorrow. We will be sitting all day tomorrow, possibly the day after the day after that on Bill C-24. If we can get through Bill C-24, the first item of business, we will consider this one after that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Blaker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is really a matter of half an hour to protect a lot of people who served us well. The subamendment of the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young) requires no more than half an hour of the time of the committee to look at it.

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young) that in fact the Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates is seized with a very important Bill. I believe that every time slot is tied up for the next 10 days. I would be afraid that the Bill would not receive the proper consideration it needs.

I am sure the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), who is Chairman of that Committee, would do everything possible to expedite the work in consideration of this Bill if we refer the subject matter to the Committee. To have it back in the House within 10 days is highly unlikely. Since the Committee will be tied up for at least 10 days in discussions on a very important Bill, and in view of the very important event which will be happening in the last three days of next week, I would suggest to the Hon. Member that we provide a little more time, perhaps 20 days, on the understanding that the Chairman of the Committee, who is a very active and capable Chairman, would report it as soon as possible. Otherwise, it is impractical to expect the subject matter to be reported back with the due consideration it needs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young) seeking to be recognized to speak again?