

Public Service

I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill being proposed this afternoon by my good friend from Regina West has, in my opinion, one glaring flaw.

Mr. Dick: I knew you guys were together.

Mr. Gauthier: Did you want to speak, Paul?

Mr. Dick: I said I knew you guys were together.

Mr. Gauthier: Well, he proposed the Bill, not you. So I am talking to—

Mr. Dick: You said, "Your good friend".

Mr. Gauthier: Yes, he is my good friend. Like you, I think.

Mr. Dick: What time is that?

Mr. Gauthier: From time to time. I won't go to Calabogie anymore.

I think, Mr. Speaker, justice would be done as well as seen to be done if we were to agree here this afternoon, and I include my good friend from Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick) in this, that we would like to see this matter studied further by a committee of the House. With the agreement of the Hon. Member for Regina West, I would like to propose this motion:

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

"Bill C-216, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act and the Public Service Staff Relations Act (political rights) be not now read a second time but that the Order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

I see that the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) seconds this motion, and with that I will sit down, hoping that we have the agreement of all Members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Dick: Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has not even had an opportunity of speaking to this Bill. I think it would be premature to move a motion such as that.

Mr. Benjamin: It is open for debate.

Mr. Dick: I can only indicate that at this time, and only because it is at this time, the Government does not feel the matter should go to committee. We think it is premature only because it is now being discussed in another forum and we do not think it should be discussed in two forums at the same time. They are in the midst of difficult negotiations, as the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) indicated. These are very dicey topics. It is only for that reason. How-

ever, I think other people in this Party would like to participate in this debate.

• (1630)

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I regret very much the comments just made by the Hon. Member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick). I would ask Members of the Government to reconsider very seriously the statement he made suggesting that it is premature to have the subject matter of this Bill referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates. I say that very seriously. I respect what he said and what my friend from the riding of Ottawa-Carleton has been telling me as well. He indicated that there is some fear that an early consideration of this subject matter by the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates may jeopardize negotiations now under way, which is essentially what the Hon. Member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton said as well.

I have taken this issue very much to heart since I became a member of the Ontario legislature. When I was a member of another Parliament I put forward Bills on this subject. I said I would fight on this issue here in the House if I was elected. I think that there would be no objection by my Party if, once the matter was referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, it was held back for a month or two in the hope that concrete results would ensue. I would like to make that suggestion and I ask members of the government Party not to talk the Bill out and thus prevent the motion for referral of the subject matter from coming to a favourable vote.

I had the opportunity of speaking directly with one of the leaders of the public service unions involved about this matter several weeks ago after the initial discussions between The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) and the public service unions. I was updated on this subject less than 24 hours ago. My information is that while the subject matter has been raised, by no means does it indicate that a specific proposal had been put forward which is the subject of negotiation. Only the most preliminary indication has been given that the Treasury Board is prepared to consider the possibility of having discussions with representatives of the public service unions. There is nothing more than that, Mr. Speaker. That would indicate to me that at this point negotiations are not actually being engaged in.

From time to time I battle in caucus for the opportunity to question the President of the Treasury Board on this subject. Unfortunately I have not been able to. In the fall, when I had the opportunity to do so, he was travelling and I could not raise the issue with him at that time.

I appeal to members of the Government not to block this motion at this time. This Bill came forward with relatively little notice due to the parliamentary calendar. However, through our House Leader we have been in touch with the Government House Leader (Mr. Hnatyshyn) since this morning seeking to give advance notice to the government Party that this was coming forward. We indicated that we would certainly be willing to have the matter referred.