

employees and causes them, I think, to perform in a less positive manner in many cases than if their sensitivity to some of the other problems that face them has been recognized by the government.

I think the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton was fairly accurate in pointing out at least what some of these problems might be. There is a good deal more behind the declining morale of public servants than the uncertainty caused by the bilingual program. I refer to the words related to the treatment of women within the public service dealing with promotional opportunities, which most times we can say are dubious at best.

I think we can also say that the hon. member's points related to equal pay and opportunities to proceed without the kind of male-female discrimination that abounds are well taken. We should recognize that discriminations exist. This is one of the reasons a woman was appointed not long ago to be one of the three commissioners; it was recognized that the opportunities for women in the public service were not equivalent to those of men, despite the fact that approximately one quarter of the government's employees are women.

However, I think there is much more to the problem than is stated in the motion and there are a number of other areas with which we should examine apart from the specific details cited as one act that relates to this act which relates to some other act. I think perhaps it is insufficient to get to a legal interpretation and hang one argument on one clause and then move to another clause. I am probably presenting this kind of defence because I am not prepared to do otherwise this afternoon. I do not, however, think that is the matter before us. Both hon. members have outlined the pros and cons and the details of the problem, one mildly defending the government and the other mildly attacking it.

• (1750)

There are a number of more general questions: for instance, reclassification has been going on since 1967 and has not yet been completed to date. Naturally, the delay creates a certain amount of unrest and instability among members of the public service. Even among members of the professional institute alone there is a tremendous reclassification backlog, stretching over a period of almost six years. We should not ignore delays like that. I repeat that I do not think we can lay the blame for all the uncertainty that faces public servants solely on the bilingualism act: that attitude is superficial; it is merely looking for an easy way out along the road toward some kind of bigotry and I do not think it is necessarily the case at all.

We must also face the question of bargaining rights. The dispute over clause 7 of the Public Service Staff Relations Act has gone on for years and years. For the sake of hon. members who do not know what clause 7 implies, I will read it. It provides:

Nothing in this act shall be construed to affect the right or authority of the employer—

That is the government.

—to determine the organization of the public service and to assign duties to and classify positions therein.

Public Service

What kind of bargaining rights are those? Doesn't this place massive power in the hands of the government to control almost everything in the public service, everything related to decent kinds of employment practices and fair employment practices and leave virtually little of importance to the public servant? What happened recently in the postal dispute? In my view the government was unable to settle that dispute as quickly as possible because the arbitrator in his recommendations went beyond the terms of clause 7. As a matter of fact, he recommended that certain matters which had previously been completely within the prerogative of the government should henceforth be negotiable.

It seems to me that if parliament is going to give these awesome powers to the government to determine the organization of the public service, to assign duties and to classify positions, and after some time say that the crucial things are not negotiable, then the government can get away with murder. And it does. It gets away with such things as allowing for arbitration to provide for a raise in salary at a particular level and then a few weeks later reclassifying the position concerned so that the employee in effect gets a salary raise and a cut at the same time. This has happened in the corrections branch and in a number of other agencies of government. Such behaviour adds to the over-all uncertainty and resentment of many public servants.

The controversial clause 7 is a subject which I have raised previously, Mr. Speaker. I first raised it on December 7, 1970. At that time the answer was, "We are considering amending this." Surely the government should have reviewed this question a long time ago. I spoke again on the subject on February 22, 1971. At that time I tried to reconcile the statement of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) that the Public Service Staff Relations Act was under review, which he made on November 27 of the previous year, with the statement of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in a letter to the professional institute some time in December saying it was not under review. It simply could not be under review and not under review all within a matter of weeks. But after being around this place for four years I can readily understand the confusion that sometimes exists between the Prime Minister and other members of his cabinet.

Apparently that review was pursued later. On November 16, 1971, about six months later, I learned that indeed a review had taken place. But, Mr. Speaker, now it was an internal review headed by Mr. Bryden, a man who has and deserves the respect of a great many people. As a result, his report was preserved as an internal document. I submit that whenever the government wants to get credit for something, it becomes public; but if the government wants to check on something that is really "dicey", it goes to the extremes of furtiveness. For example I cite the case of the Bryden report. As I have said, I learned about it on November 16, 1971. Now here we are in February of 1973. Where is the Bryden report? It is still secret. This is the kind of procedure that contributes to the morale-shattering mood of too many public servants. That is why the appeals to public servants and why promises made to them fall on deaf ears. They have heard that song before.