

*Civil Service Act*

Mr. BOWMAN: I cannot see where they do not if we have a real merit system.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Likely information on that point came before the committee, and I should like to know whether in recent appointments any private secretary to a minister has prevented promotion in the civil service.

Mr. BOWMAN: Unless an absolutely new position were created, I cannot conceive where that would not be the case.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I hate to interrupt, but I thought the committee had evidence to that effect, because I saw a good deal of it in the newspapers. My private secretary was a civil servant and of course returned to the department, so I have no personal experience of the situation described. I was thinking of private secretaries to other former ministers and I have not heard of their displacing anybody.

Mr. BOWMAN: The committee have taken it for granted to this extent that where private secretaries have been given appointments in the civil service, they must take established positions; otherwise those positions would be open to competition in the usual way.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Is it not provided in the act that they are to be given positions of chief clerk or better?

Mr. BOWMAN: Yes, but if that is done, they take positions which others now lower down in the service would ultimately fill, and so they stop the whole line of promotion. Personally I quite agree that some, from their experience, would prove to be very valuable civil servants; but after all, if you are going to have a merit system, they should enter the service just the same as anybody else, that is, by competition and merit combined. That and the reasons set out by the senior member for Ottawa were those that appealed to the members of the committee in bringing in this recommendation. We felt that a man who had a great number of years of experience in the position which he occupied in a department, should not have his right of promotion interfered with by the injection into the service before him, of somebody merely because the latter had occupied the position of private secretary.

Mr. CARMICHAEL: I wish to express my approval of this amendment as outlined in the proposed bill and to endorse the remarks made by the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Bowman), and the senior member for Ottawa

[Mr. C. A. Stewart.]

(Mr. Chevrier). As I understand the situation, it is that a minister has a right to select his private secretary whosoever he desires. A private secretary need not have any special academic qualifications; he is a man whom the minister selects to do his private work, whom the minister thinks will be capable of doing that special work. He is a man perhaps for whom the minister has a liking, who will be congenial, and a man, or, indeed it may be a lady, who will be capable of filling a position that may require a special personal qualification. But it does not necessarily follow that that particular person could drop into some department of government and fill just as acceptably a position there. Further, if I understand the practice correctly, it is that when a private secretary has held such a position for a year, if some change of government should occur or if for some other reason that secretary is thrown out of such a position, then he or she is required to be taken into the civil service in some department of government. I believe that to be a correct statement of the situation. When they are made permanent with some department, I understand they are given very handsome salaries. Surely there is no element of fairness in that procedure. It leads naturally to dissatisfaction among those other civil servants, many of whom may, as has been pointed out, have been in the department for a number of years and are anxiously waiting for promotion. This private secretary, who may not be at all capable, is taken into that department and given perhaps a position of seniority over those who have been there for ten, fifteen or more years. That is most unfair. If the provision were made—and I presume it exists—that private secretaries might come into the civil service through the method of examination just like any other applicant, that would be fair. In that case it would be open to any private secretary to come into the service under prescribed examination, and if he or she should be qualified for that position, he or she should be taken on and given a rating along with others.

As regards the argument that because a private secretary has left some other position, he should be given special consideration, in all fairness that argument is not used in reference to members of parliament. Members of parliament leave their callings and take their chances with the public for one year, or two or more years. But after the public says; We do not want you any longer, no special provision is made for us; we drop out and sometimes we may drop very hard, but we have to look out for ourselves. There is no department of government to reach out a welcome