

Employment in Public Service

Another feature of this bill about which I have some reservations is the appeal procedure. The bill was slightly improved in this respect by the joint special committee, but I consider the appeal provisions are still primitive, unsatisfactory and indeed offensive to natural justice. I am satisfied that it will not be long before the Public Service Commission and the government are compelled by events to establish genuinely independent and impartial appellate tribunals. My views in this respect are set forth in a private bill which I introduced earlier this session and which is on the order paper as Bill C-63. I remain unconvinced that the provisions of this bill, even strengthened as they were by the special joint committee, come anywhere close to providing a really satisfactory system of appeal.

Then, sir, may I draw attention to the fact that the provisions of the old Civil Service Act relating to the parliamentary staff have been dropped. By section 72 of the existing Civil Service Act the Senate and House of Commons might apply by resolution any provisions of the act to the staff of this house, the other place or the Library of Parliament. No doubt this right exists even in the absence of legislation. But I believe this chamber is entitled to know from the minister before this bill passes what the intentions of the commissioners of internal economy are in this respect. Will they recommend that the provisions of this bill either in whole or in part be applied to the parliamentary staff?

That leads me to the question of political participation by civil servants. Here, I submit, the government has proposed feeble and halting steps. They are of almost no significance. Personally, I would have preferred the emulation of the three-tiered system in effect in the United Kingdom and now in operation in the province of Ontario. For the life of me I cannot see why a packer or helper or an elevator operator or laboratory technician should be deprived of political rights, whereas on the other hand, of course, any policy adviser must obviously be restricted.

Since I think hon. gentlemen opposite are determined not to go further than the frail and laboured provisions of new clause 32, I do not propose to press the matter further at this time, but I do want to draw attention to the recommendation of the special joint committee as follows:

The consensus is that the whole question of political participation by public servants should be reviewed after the next general election in the light of experience and knowledge gained to

that time. Interested groups might then wish to make more specific representations for the consideration of parliament.

Personally I hope that at that time, with a new government in office, something approximating the new Ontario legislation introduced by a Progressive Conservative government may be achieved. I hope that then there will be more disposition to experimentation and that a genuine attempt will be made to balance the essential impartiality and the imperative non-partisanship of the public service with the ordinary political rights of citizenship in a democratic country.

• (5:20 p.m.)

With these reservations and doubts, I propose to support the bill. On certain clauses I shall have additional comments. After the bill has been in effect for two or three years I believe the operations of the new Public Service Commission should be referred to another special joint committee for study, investigation and assurance on the subjects I have raised. The merit system is a precious one, the very cornerstone of our civil service, and its full preservation intact is the responsibility of this parliament as well as of the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Chairman, at this stage I do not think it is necessary to make a very lengthy comment. I join of course, with the President of the Treasury Board and the hon. member for Carleton in emphasizing the importance of the merit system and in expressing pleasure that the prevailing rate employees who formerly were outside it are now brought under the merit system through the bill which is now before the committee. I have not had the experience that the hon. member for Carleton says he has had of interviewing thousands of people wanting patronage jobs. I am glad that this will not be possible from now on in his case or in the case of anyone else in government or outside government.

I should like to direct the attention of the committee to another point of progress in this bill which I consider of great importance and which the joint committee considered of great importance, that is, the recognition to a greater extent than was the case in respect of the Civil Service Act of the bilingual character of the federal function. Members of the committee will see, particularly in clause 14, that notices of vacancies are to be given in both languages at all times with certain exceptions which are left to the discretion of the Public Service Commission. Obviously there would