

Private Members' Business

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden said, we have done a lot of work in a short period of time. I believe we have a lot of good things here for the veterans. We have a lot more things that have to be worked on.

I am pleased that a study group has been established. I look forward to many of the meetings that this group will be having in the upcoming months and years to participate in this.

My feeling is that the number of veterans are decreasing. Therefore, the amounts of money should increase and more people should be receiving the benefits as time goes on for many of the problems they have had since the Korean War, particularly, the latest group of them. We have to look to the people who will be coming back from whatever takes place in the gulf and other areas that may continue. I just want to say that I appreciate having the opportunity to participate in this debate and in the Committee of the Whole today. We have accomplished much, but we have much, much further to go.

• (1700)

Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—BILLS

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Tuesday, October 16, consideration of the motion of Mr. Young (Beaches—Woodbine) that Bill C-225, an act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (staff of members of the House of Commons), be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise and speak briefly on Bill C-225, which was brought to this House through the private members' system by the hon. member for Beaches—Woodbine.

This bill has a long and honourable history in that it goes back to 1984, when it was first introduced by the then member for Lachine, Rod Blaker. At that time, it came out of an all-committee discussion and was backed by members of all parties in that committee because there was a feeling that something had to be done with respect to the staff of members of Parliament, the people who work for MPs.

The motion was brought forward by the hon. member for Beaches—Woodbine to the committee. Again there was a recognition that certainly the situation had changed over the years in respect of the employment status of people who work for members of Parliament.

In years past, when there was a much smaller staff, there was a revolving pool of staff members here on the Hill and it operated like the Public Service does, except that they worked continuously in members' offices, worked for members from different parties and served as a pool of experienced people. A lot of their work was much less political, perhaps, than what it is today. It was basic research, secretarial, and so on.

With the increase in members' staffs, obviously there was a need to do something. The all-party committee recognized this and the hon. member for Beaches—Woodbine brought forward this motion. I think it has reached its intended objectives. It has forced members to focus on the whole question of staff relations here on the Hill, to look at how they are handling their own staff relations, how their caucus handles staff relations, and I think some very useful debate, inside and outside of the House, has occurred as a result of this bill having been put forward.

I think there is still broad support for the principles that motivated this bill. In other words, there needs to be some protection for workers who are employees of members of Parliament. In other words, they cannot simply be there, subject to the political whims and so on that are so much a part of this business and not even be able to avail themselves of the basic employment rights that members in any other sector, doing the same kind of work, would have with respect to working conditions and so on.

In consultation with the member for Beaches—Woodbine, it seemed to us that there had been some misunderstanding of the intent of this bill as shown by some of the references made by other members in the debate and other comment on this bill, that somehow or other its effect would be to entrench another level of privilege into the House of Commons system and that it might create some unfair advantages. In other words, the technical aspects of this bill had not been really solidly addressed.