

assume that it is because the government in its actions has displayed a very high-handed approach in its dealings with the Public Service of Canada.

I need not go back over history to prove that point. Members of the public and members of this House will well recall the really shocking treatment the government meted out to its public servants recently in the course of the strike. For the first time in our history, certainly since the Second World War, the government legislated the members of the Public Service back to work without any binding arbitration arrangement. It legislated a zero per cent increase which even its friends in Toronto did not do. A one per cent increase was negotiated in Toronto while this government legislated back at zero per.

I think all Canadians were appalled at the government's callousness and the manifest unfairness it portrayed in the course of proceedings on that bill. It had already given a 4.2 per cent increase to management in the Public Service, and then it legislated the people in the lower echelons of the Public Service back to work at zero per cent.

Mr. Dick: That is untrue and you know it.

Mr. Milliken: The Minister of Supply and Services says that is untrue and I know it. I know that in fact it is the opposite and he knows it. He was there. He knows that the 4.2 per cent increase was given in February 1991 before the budget came down. If he has forgotten I suggest he take a look at the budget documents which indicate that was in fact done. It is public knowledge. It is on the public record.

Mr. Dick: You are misinforming the public. It is untrue.

Mr. Milliken: I challenge the hon. minister to rise and participate in the debate if he disagrees with what I say. He knows a 4.2 per cent increase was given in February 1991 and a zero per cent increase was legislated for the remainder. In fact, I recall he had an opportunity to participate in the debate on that bill. I do not recall that he did.

As my friend from Gloucester says, the Minister of Supply and Services is a great defender of the Ottawa Public Service, except in the case of some of these bills.

Government Orders

I want to turn to the fact that this particular bill is based on a policy paper which was prepared by a group of individuals put together by the government for the purpose. Ten task forces were created to deal with 10 different areas of interest in respect of the development of the Public Service. If you look at the list it all sounds very reasonable.

Who sat on the task forces? Thirty-one deputy ministers, twelve assistant deputy ministers and nine heads of personnel sat on the task forces, that is who. There was not a single representative of any of the Public Service unions and no one from the lower echelons of the Public Service. They were all high ranking public officials who sat on these task forces devising ways, in their view, to improve efficiency in operations of the Public Service.

There is no doubt the changes recommended could lead to greater efficiency, but I suggest that fairness and proper treatment of persons employed in the Public Service are liable to be sacrificed by the terms of this bill in favour of political or administrative expediency.

I introduced a private member's bill in this House, Bill C-234, to amend the Public Service Employment Act in part. The purpose of the bill was to ensure that persons appearing before the Public Service Commission for hearings, grievances on promotion, transfer and whatever, got a fair hearing. They would have been able to see the documents that were used by the other side against them. They would have had an opportunity to bring witnesses to the board and cross-examine witnesses presented on the other side.

The new bill does not contain any of those procedural safeguards. It takes away some of the powers the Public Service Commission had in respect of transfer and moves them to the Treasury Board which of course is the employer's own board.

The purpose of the Public Service Commission was to establish an independent body that would deal with the Public Service and keep it as much as possible at arm's length from the government to avoid political interference. This bill goes a long way toward breaking down that arm's length relationship and that aura of independence and responsibility the Public Service Commission has exercised in this country for most of this century.

I see my time has expired. I will continue my remarks after the lunch break.