

*Government Orders*

**Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, as I rise to take part in this debate I find what I see taking place here very disturbing.

The other members who spoke discussed promotion on the merit principle. What we are also seeing happen is a loss of morale within the Public Service. There are people in CEIC centres and other places telling the unemployed: "Don't bother to come here, there are no jobs. We cannot find you any jobs".

Prior to these changes, and the proposed changes in this bill, the people in these centres would go out of their way, they would go that extra mile, to try to help the unemployed. This is lowering the morale of these people. They do not know where they are going to be. They do not know that if they do their job well they are going to be the people who are selected for promotion.

I am scared at what I see happening here, because we are taking this away. This is something where the Public Service says yes, there have been a lot of problems with it over the years. There has been quite a bureaucratic nightmare in a lot of cases. I hesitate to warn the government that we cannot change these things this drastically, to give this power to managers and just to throw out the merit principle. I find this bothers me and I know it bothers the Public Service of this country. It certainly bothers the public of this country because you have people coming to you. You know the old saying: "If you don't know somebody, you are not going to get that promotion". This is an area that certainly the public is very concerned about. I am sure that if we allow this amendment that has been put forward, it will make this bill that much more palatable.

• (2150)

**Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands):** Mr. Speaker, I do not understand this approach on the part of members opposite. They say "here it comes". I do not understand why they would think "here it comes". I suppose the President of the Treasury Board is a little antsy. He knows he is moving a bad bill and he is afraid that he is going to get roasted for it. I recall roasting him one time before. It drove him to prayer.

I think what he would want to do is reconsider his view. I ask him to seriously reconsider his view of clause 2 of this bill because my very hon. and distinguished colleague from Ottawa West has moved an amendment that

makes great sense and will save us from the difficulties envisaged by the hon. member for Hillsborough.

I listened to the speech of the hon. member for Ottawa South. I did not have the benefit of hearing all of the speech of the hon. member for Carleton—Gloucester, so I was not able to say that he dwelt on quite the same terrors that were outlined by the other members in relation to what would happen with this bill if it is passed in its existing form. The President of the Treasury Board, who has a significant responsibility for the Public Service in this country, should know better than to introduce a bill such as this with this kind of change in the House.

I know what is going on and I think the public of Canada knows what is going on. It is a power grab by senior public servants. The minister is being used as their tool for the purpose of getting this power grab. They are taking over the question of promotion and transfer in the Public Service in a way as well as demotion—promotion, demotion and transfer in the Public Service—in a way that is totally unprecedented in our system. Ultimately the responsibility for that is going to fall on the minister's head, so that when an incompetent gets shifted or moved into a higher position without competition in the face of—

**An hon. member:** The Peter principle.

**Mr. Milliken:** No, no, no. The hon. member for Hillsborough would not want to call it the Peter principle. If someone of lesser competence gets transferred to a position for which there were better applicants, there is going to be a problem. It is going to create problems for ministers. It is going to create problems for deputy ministers and worse, it is going to create problems for the public of Canada who have reason to expect a reasonable level of service from their Public Service.

What this bill is doing is taking away any sense of responsibility for these appointments from the independent Public Service Commission. Far be it from me to stand here today to defend the Public Service Commission. I have moved amendments to this bill which we will be discussing another day that would restrict its powers. In my view it has not shown itself to be responsive to the wishes of Parliament to which it is responsible. The hon. member for Burlington perhaps disagrees. If so, I invite him to rise and make a speech. I would be glad to hear from him on this subject.