

Hon. John M. Macdonald moved second reading of the bill.

He said: Honourable senators, this bill in its nature is a comprehensive revision of the Civil Service Act, which act has been in force in Canada since, I believe, 1918. Although it has been amended from time to time, there has been no major revision of the legislation. For some time now it has been felt that a revision was necessary in order to bring the act into accord, as it were, with modern developments, both in administration and in employer-employee relations. So it was decided to make this comprehensive revision.

A great deal of time and study has gone into the writing of this legislation and it is hoped that it will fill the needs of the present. No doubt further experience will indicate that amendment is necessary from time to time, but the efforts of the Civil Service Commission, departmental draftsmen, and the legislators in what we call the other place, have combined to create a revised act which is markedly superior to existing legislation.

Honourable senators, the report of the Civil Service Commission on personnel administration, known as the Heeney Report, made many recommendations which by and large have been incorporated into this new measure as far as it was considered possible and practicable to do so. However, there are two main exceptions. The recommendation that Government agencies, at present outside the civil service, should be brought within the act has not been considered desirable at this time. The recommendation with reference to veterans' preference too has not been incorporated into the new legislation because the Government considers that it is bound to maintain the benefits and privileges enjoyed by veterans with active service overseas.

The bill itself is divided into five parts. I do not propose to deal with the sections separately as the bill is lengthy and is one which I think by its very nature lends itself to an examination in committee. If the measure receives second reading I propose to move that it be referred to committee.

Briefly, clause 2 is the interpretation section.

Part I, comprising clauses 4 to 8, deals with the Civil Service Commission itself, in such matters as the establishment of the commission and its general powers and duties.

Part II, embracing clauses 9 to 19, deals with the organization of the civil service, beginning with the functions of classification and carrying on with pay and allowances and establishments

Part III is comprised of clauses 20 to 49, and these deal with appointments to the civil service.

Part IV, comprising clauses 50 to 65, is general and deals largely with the terms and conditions of employment.

Honourable senators may recall that last year Bill C-77, a measure dealing with this subject, was introduced but was not proceeded with. It was introduced for the purpose of attracting the advice and recommendations of those interested. As a result there are numerous differences between that bill and the one under consideration tonight. Many of these differences are minor and of administrative significance only. However there are two noteworthy changes.

A good deal of publicity was given to the views of the Civil Service Staff Association concerning clause 7 of Bill C-71. For the first time in our history that clause established in statutory form recognition of the proposition that consultation should take place between representatives of the Government and the commission and representatives of the staff association in relation to pay and conditions of work. That clause was criticized on the ground it would reserve to the Minister of Finance and the commission the initiation of such discussions, and that no such right extended to the association. This measure meets this objection by clear provisions for the recognition of the right of the staff association to initiate discussions with either the Government or the commission in relation to matters of pay and conditions of work.

The other major change from Bill C-77 relates to the definition of what is generally known as the prevailing rates group of Government employees in certain trades and occupations traditionally outside the classified civil service. It appeared that the definition might open the door to the enlargement of this group by excluding certain classes from the civil service itself, without control being exercised by the commission. This new bill has been drafted to make clear that action in relation to prevailing rates employees cannot be taken without a recommendation for such action from the Civil Service Commission.

I do not intend to comment in detail on the bill. However, I wish to state that its general purpose is to reaffirm the principle of the merit system, and to protect the independence of the Civil Service Commission and of the service itself, within the compass of legislation designed to overcome the many administrative problems which have arisen in the last forty-four years.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the Canadian civil service is held in the highest respect, not only here in Canada but abroad as well. The bill now before honourable