

Public Service

across the public service. This joint consultation has been a very satisfactory means of settling matters which would be extremely difficult to resolve at 80 bargaining tables. The recent medicare and hospitalization premium improvements are an excellent illustration of the product of effective and joint consultation.

• (1740)

I fully agree with the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton that there should be no discrimination on the basis of sex or marital status within the public service. However, I would submit that at the present time there is no discrimination on the basis of sex or marital status within the public service under the existing legislation. Coming, as I do, from a house full of women, I am very conscious of the fact that there should be no such discrimination. Indeed, if I were to advocate or support it I would be in trouble in my own home.

Recently I had the opportunity as a member of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates to witness at first hand the excellence of the Canadian public service. Supplementary estimates were brought before that committee by many government departments. The Department of Agriculture provided information to the committee through senior public servants with respect to crop loss to farmers in eastern Canada as a result of adverse weather conditions. Their in-depth knowledge of the affairs of the department was of great help to me and to all who were sitting on that committee and it is indeed reassuring to know that the policies of this parliament are being executed by public servants of such high calibre.

The same can be said of the public servants who provided factual information to the committee with respect to their department, whether the Department of the Environment, the Department of External Affairs, the Department of Finance, the Department of Manpower and Immigration, the Department of National Health and Welfare; indeed, all of the departments which had supplementary estimates to be considered at the most recent sitting of the committee. On many occasions the public servants who were witnesses were subject to in-depth probing and cross-examination by members of all parties who were on that committee as well as other Members of Parliament who asked questions.

It was my observation that the public servants in all cases showed a mastery of the particular field in which they were interested and provided the committee with useful and factual information with respect to their particular subject. What I witnessed recently in that committee confirms again the true excellence of our public service. Such a public service should, indeed, have the benefit of fair and just personnel relations policies.

Although many of those who testified before the miscellaneous estimates committee were senior public servants and therefore not within the bargaining unit, I am sure they would be the first to acknowledge with me that they would be unable to do their job as efficiently or as well without the assistance of the majority of public servants who are within the bargaining unit.

In summary, therefore, it would appear from a review of the legislation respecting labour relations practices within the public service that amendments to these two

[Mr. Poulin.]

acts to incorporate the provisions of the Canada Labour Code would, in fact, add no significant benefits to the public servants that do not already exist and are available to them under the Public Service Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Employment Act, but that amendments such as suggested by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton would only add, as I have indicated earlier, confusion to what is already a complex field of labour relations. They might, in fact, detract from the benefits now enjoyed under these acts and the order in council referred to and presently available to the public service.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my contribution to this afternoon's debate I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Poulin) on his maiden speech. I suggest that he gave us a very scholarly defence of the status quo; nevertheless, it does not take away from the kind of intelligence he put into the preparation and the presentation of his remarks.

I support the motion put before us by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker). I would like to say, also, that I was impressed by the kind of detailed information, deep thought and study that he has demonstrated before us this afternoon. We have had an afternoon in which we have been treated to the fascination of procedural debates which are a little like chamber music; they are great for the participants but sometimes they are hell to listen to. Nevertheless, I would say that this is not the first time I have interested myself in the concerns of public servants not only in the capital area but also in my own riding.

I can report with some accuracy, I think, that the morale of the many thousands of public servants we have in Canada is probably not at its greatest apex or peak, and this has been true for the last four or five years. I think the concern is real enough and it should be apparent to the government that the loss of three Ottawa seats last October 30 indicates that perhaps all is not well, as some of us may have been led to believe by the words of the hon. member for Ottawa Centre, because these Ottawa ridings have heavy populations of civil servants.

While it is convenient, perhaps, to lay the blame on the loss of these three seats on some racist demagoguery of some candidates—I hasten to add that probably in the heat of the campaign some hasty and unfortunate statements were made—as one who supported, and still supports, the bilingual policy and the bilingual legislation behind that policy I think it is as accurate to say that there has been a heavy-handed implementation of that policy which has but added to the already massive frustration and uncertainty felt by many public servants.

If we as employers desire to be more civil to civil servants, we must be more sensitive to the legitimate aspirations of public servants and their demand for stable and enlightened treatment by the largest employer in the country—the government of Canada. In fact, the government of Canada has an obligation in my view—not just the responsibility, but more than that; an obligation—to be a model for the country on labour and management relations. This has not been the case in the past. It is responsible for the large amount of resentment which festers among an otherwise excellent group of public