

Mr. HACKETT: Does the hon. member consider that this would be a departure from the merit system? Does he not consider that private secretaries have some opportunity of establishing their merit and that they are appointed because of merit?

Mr. CHEVRIER: I can only answer my hon. friend by quoting the definition of appointments to the civil service. An appointment to the civil service proper is made only upon a competitive examination or a demonstration of skill. I have yet to be shown that any of these private secretaries have been appointed into the service upon a competitive examination or a demonstration of skill. So long as the merit system is defined along those lines I cannot logically admit that these secretaries are being admitted into the service upon a competitive basis. If there is a vacancy and these secretaries can bring themselves within the rules and regulations of the Civil Service Commission to compete in examinations, that course might be tried, but I think even then difficulty would be encountered. In the case of promotions or vacancies unless there are no departmental men or women capable of filling the position, no outsider can compete. The deputy head of a department must state that there is no one in the department in line for promotion to the vacant position before an outsider is allowed to compete. I think the course taken by the committee was a fair one towards the service and showed its intention that the merit system as described by the statute should be continued and that those employees in the service who have been long waiting for a promotion should not be debarred simply because someone who has served a minister well and truly is to be taken into the service.

When a minister comes into office he has two alternatives in the selection of a private secretary; he may appoint a new secretary or take over the secretary who served the previous minister. There are private secretaries who have served ministers under different administrations, and there are others who are appointed because of the fortunes of war and perhaps they should be prepared to go out when the fortunes of war go the other way. I think it would be a good thing if a system of permanent private secretaries was adopted.

Mr. NICHOLSON: In connection with the question raised by the hon. member as to actual merit against academic merit, I should like to ask the hon. member if he does not consider that when a minister appoints a secretary he does appoint one because of merit and ability. I think we can take for granted

that when a private secretary is appointed he has some merit—merit at least equal to that of the majority of civil servants. He has, shall we say at least four years' experience with the minister, the deputy minister, members of the house and the public and is it not reasonable to say that the experience acquired, plus the ability he had when appointed, would put him on a level with the average civil servant? My hon. friend shakes his head but it is my opinion that a private secretary with the experience he has gained and the ability he possessed when appointed is just about equal to any man or woman in the category of the service to which he would be appointed. To my way of thinking it is most unfair to cast these men adrift simply because a change has occurred in the government. I have come in contact with former private secretaries who are now in the service and it is my opinion that their being there is of advantage to the service.

Mr. BOWMAN: Mr. Chairman, I think the senior member for Ottawa (Mr. Chevrier) has stated clearly the reasons why the committee brought in this recommendation. I agree with what the hon. members for Stanstead (Mr. Hackett) and East Algoma (Mr. Nicholson) have said with respect to the merits of the private secretary, but I cannot see that what they said with respect to being cast adrift applies because these private secretaries would have a right to compete for vacant positions.

Mr. NICHOLSON: To start at the bottom.

Mr. BOWMAN: Why should they not start at the bottom on the same basis as many others? After all, a man who has served perhaps twenty or twenty-five years in the civil service is entitled to some consideration. Why should a private secretary, simply because he has occupied for a year, or two, or three, or four years that position with one of the ministers, be given a position in the civil service in priority to the other man? Not only does this procedure deprive of promotion the man whose position is immediately below that given to the private secretary—

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Has this procedure deprived any civil servant of his promotion? I have never heard of such a case.

Mr. BOWMAN: If private secretaries are placed in positions of importance, of seniority, they must certainly stop the whole line of promotion from the bottom up.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Not necessarily.