

the point where prison inmates have the right to vote in an election. So why should a public employee lose his political rights? Except that I had given a more specific definition of categories of people who should enjoy full rights when it comes to running in municipal, provincial or federal elections, including men and women who, in my opinion, would not be able to run or actively support a Party without causing prejudice to the service they give taxpayers, or even to the work which Parliament and the Government must do.

For instance, I specifically mentioned all deputy heads, which the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre has also done. I do not see how a deputy head could be a candidate and continue to carry out his duties after or during an electoral campaign while publicly supporting the political views of a given party.

I also said that the immediate assistant of the deputy head, that is either the Assistant Deputy Minister or the Associate Deputy Minister, was in the same position of having access to privileged information and of being able to influence Government policies and the administration of his Department. I therefore cannot see how such a person could be given these rights. However, if we exclude the deputy head and his immediate subordinate, there are a great number of public servants who, in my opinion, should have all the rights including that of being a candidate in provincial or municipal elections without having to ask for leave to do so, except if they occupy positions where they are dealing with Government policies, for instance as program or planning director. I believe that my colleague for Ottawa Centre speaks in this regard of confidential positions, and I have some difficulty with that as I do not understand exactly what he means. I know that he says that there will be regulations to define such positions, but in my own bill, I specified that this applied to policy development and planning, as I could not see how such rights could be granted to employees with such responsibilities.

But in the case of all other positions, whether secretarial, maintenance, or whatever, which have nothing to do with Government policies, I do not see why an employee would not have every right to become a candidate, to campaign or to support a party as long as he does not do so during working hours. I also added, Madam Speaker, that employees should have the right to refuse to work for a given party, as some of my constituents have told me that they were faced with the obligation of supporting actively or indirectly one party or another because they were public servants. I therefore believe that the rights of public servants should include the right to refuse to support a party and to campaign indirectly or directly for such a party.

**Mr. Cassidy:** This is covered by Clause 8.

**Mrs. Mailly:** The difference is in the way that this is defined, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Member says that this is covered by Clause 8 of his Bill. Let us go there immediately:

—no employer shall refuse to continue to employ an employee or otherwise discriminate against an employee in regard to employment or any term or condition of employment on the ground that the employee refuses to engage in partisan work—

### *Public Employees Political Rights Act*

The Hon. Member is right, but I achieved the same thing differently when defining this right. It was a different approach.

All this goes to say, Madam Speaker, that we generally agree on this issue, but have a different approach. This is why I find it difficult to support this Bill.

There is also another aspect. The Hon. Member said earlier that we are getting near the time for provincial elections. For my part, I believe that there should be an exception. I was saying to myself, yes, a public servant should be able to seek election on the provincial level, but I cannot admit that he could campaign for and support a provincial party with as much freedom as he would do on the federal level. I have a problem there, because I will realize he is a federal servant. We should therefore draw a line in his political commitment to another level of Government. This is an idea that I have, a suggestion I am making—we should look at that aspect.

This is why, Madam Speaker, I cannot support the legislation as it now stands, but I agree with my colleague for Ottawa Centre that it is about time the issue were seriously discussed by a committee of the House. Now, we cannot refer the Bill to a legislative committee and have the same kind of discussion as if it were referred to a standing committee of the House that could look into all aspects of the matter. This means that all Members who are interested in political rights could express their views and then we would have a legislation that should be introduced, rather than going for the Bill put forward by the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre, referring it to a legislative committee where we would be restricted by—

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I have come to a point where I believe the matter of political rights should be referred to a standing committee of the House. I suppose this should be the Committee on government affairs, or something like that, so that we may really look directly into that. I know the President of the Treasury Board has discussed the matter with the unions during the negotiations. The ground is well prepared. But I believe we should stop referring to bills all the time and that kind of thing, we should really be looking at the matter seriously in order to bring forth a legislation that will please everybody, that will preserve and indeed allow for the full use of the political rights of our public servants as Canadian citizens.

• (1720)

[English]

**Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and support my colleague, the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy), on Bill C-231. This is an extremely important measure which would give political rights to federal public servants. One would hope that similar legislation would be adopted in all parts of Canada at the provincial level. It is certainly very much needed.