

Service. My riding is a Public Service riding, and I certainly intend to be a voice on behalf of those people who are public employees and who do essential jobs for Canadians through the Public Service. So far, it has been indicated that 1,500 cut-backs will begin in March, and 2,400 positions will be cut back over the next two or three years. That is disturbing and disquieting. Those numbers are less than we had feared, and for that small mercy I suppose we should be thankful. However, I want to insist that training schemes and relocation schemes be put into place so that no one in the Public Service is forced to lose his or her job as a consequence of the economies which are imposed by this Government. If there were adequate training and adequate advance identification of those workers, that would not occur. It certainly occurred when the Ministry of State for Economic Development was shut down a few months ago under the old Government. I want to ensure that the secretaries, the clerks and the little people who work in the Government get the same treatment as the high-priced bureaucrats in senior jobs received when that Ministry of State was closed down. I hope that the new Government will give that priority.

I also hope to see priority given to the question of political rights for public employees. Over the last several years people working for the Government of Canada have had to put up with an awful lot. A Liberal Government was elected which said that it was opposed to wage and price controls, but it brought in those controls. In the last two years, the Liberals brought in the six and five program. The Liberal Government did it a second time. If people working in the service of Canada wanted to get involved politically to defend their own interests, or if they wanted to get involved politically and had some interest which was completely unrelated to the fact that they worked for the federal Government, they were impeded because of federal law which gives no political rights to people who work for the Government of Canada, apart from the fact that they can vote. As well, under certain limited circumstances those people can present themselves for nomination. This was a major issue in my campaign and I am pledged to work for political rights for people who work in the Public Service of Canada. I want to see that the vast bulk of those workers do not face the disciplinary threats that they faced over the course of this year when the federal election was impending.

● (1600)

Since 1966, the Public Service Employment Act has had restrictions, but they have not effectively been in force because they had to be initiated by a candidate for Parliament, and that did not occur. However, this year the restrictions and warnings were intense. Cases have been lodged and people have been threatened with dismissal for attending political conventions, even despite the fact that no election was taking place. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that that kind of treatment runs in the face of what we have been trying to achieve in this country, which is to broaden people's political rights rather than to narrow them.

The Address—Mr. Cassidy

I want to remind the Government that when the Conservatives were campaigning this summer, before they became a government, they made it very clear that they believe that most people in the Public Service of Canada should have political rights along the lines for which I would argue and which I would support. In fact, in the correspondence with both the Professional Institute of the Public Service and also with the Public Service Alliance, Brian Mulroney, as Leader of the Conservative forces in the campaign, indicated that the matter should be addressed by an all-Party parliamentary committee in consultation with Public Service organizations, and I am quoting now—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I would hope that the Hon. Member would refer to the Right Hon. the Prime Minister as the Right Hon. the Prime Minister.

Mr. Cassidy: Well, at that time he was Brian Mulroney, but I will certainly refer to him as the now Prime Minister of Canada.

The now Prime Minister said in his letter to PIPS, "We believe the situation can be quickly resolved—", and referred to the work of the D'Avignon Commission in 1979 as a valuable base on which that should be done. I am disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that that promise was not reiterated in the Throne Speech. I urge the Government and all Hon. Members, in particular those from Public Service ridings, to ensure that that parliamentary committee is set up in the life of this Parliament, hopefully by December. I remind the Government that similar promises were made by the Liberals when they were in Opposition in 1980, but the moment they came back to power they forgot about that particular promise and commitment. I would urge the Government not to be like the Liberals. Do not start forgetting your promises as soon as you get into government. This is an issue which I believe ought to be addressed and ought to be addressed very, very soon.

There are many ethno-cultural communities in my riding. I have made some strong commitments on a number of issues which relate to people from ethno-cultural communities and I am determined to ensure that we will respect those commitments, such as action for redress to the Japanese Canadians for their treatment during the war; action for redress for the terrible situation imposed on Chinese Canadians with the head tax, which effectively shut off immigration to this country over the first part of this century; and the need for affirmative action programs within the Government of Canada in order to ensure that visible minorities are no longer discriminated against in terms of employment. I look forward to the results of the Rosalie Abella Commission on that particular subject. I regret the fact that in the Throne Speech the Government did not take advantage of the opportunity it had to commit itself to the principles and recommendations of the all-Party task force of this Parliament which were contained in the document called Equality Now. It seems to me that that is an excellent blueprint with respect to action by the Government of Canada regarding that important part of my riding, and of our country, which is represented by the ethno-cultural communities.