

*Public Service*

At the present time deputy ministers are appointed at the pleasure of the Government, so they can be removed. When a deputy minister has held his position for a long time, it is very difficult to fire him. When there is a change and a new government is in place, the resignations of all deputy ministers should follow. The legislation says that it is at the pleasure of Parliament. Then there are some 300 assistant deputy ministers who simply cannot be removed. Even if they do not agree with the philosophy of government, they remain in place. Their position in government is that they are supposed to offer continued advice and guidance on matters of high policy. They are to be program specialists and technical people. They are to be very efficient in allowing the Minister to make decisions. Ministers, deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers who have been working together for a long period of time often find that they ask those people to come forward with public policy. When a person has brought forward a policy position which his Minister has put in place, and then a new government comes into power and wants to throw out that policy, that public servant will be very reluctant to allow it to happen and perhaps will put various obstacles in the way so that it cannot come about. This Bill would allow a government coming into office to make changes at the most senior levels.

Some concern has been expressed that if that were the case there would be no office within the Public Service toward which public servants could work to attain. That office now is that of assistant deputy minister. We should make the top job in the Public Service that of director general. The salary of that person should be elevated to a level that would encourage public servants moving through the system to attain it. The difference in salary should be such that persons would try to move up to the top job. As well we would find that technical people trying to get information to their Minister would not have to run the gamble of going through the assistant deputy minister and then the deputy minister. Often it is the case that people say it is impossible to get information through their deputy ministers to their Ministers because deputy ministers or assistant deputy ministers do not want their Ministers to feel they are not in touch with everything that is going on in the Department. If those people were political appointments at the top level, they would be searching for that information. They would be political people who would want to get the information out which supported the Ministers or the Government's political philosophy.

● (1730)

I suggest that there are six reasons why the Bill should pass. The officials, namely the deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers, and Ministers would share the same basic philosophy and, therefore, the options presented for the Minister's consideration would be consistent with his own. They would bring to the Public Service new expertise in given areas with fresh ideas and approaches.

I went to the United States to see how the system worked there. I talked to some public servants under political appointments. The chief public servant in the United States Department of the Interior said there was no difficulty with the

system. As under-secretaries changed, they brought expertise from the outside sector. He said one under-secretary was an expert in information flows, another in computers and another in efficiencies. They brought that expertise to the Department. It was of great assistance.

He also said that when there was a particularly serious problem, they could pick the best expert in the general work area and bring him in for a period of a year or a year and a half to assist the Public Service and the Government in putting a policy in place. This would be of assistance to our Public Service in Canada. There would be new enthusiasm for ideas and approaches. It would allow the experts and technical people in the Public Service to bring their ideas forward to the Minister and to the political people in the Department. They could be analysed and possibly put into place.

Third, it would facilitate the implementation of the program on which the Party had been elected to office. In my experience in the very short period of time we were in government, this was a serious problem. This Bill would assist a government coming into power by allowing it to implement its program.

Fourth, it would reduce substantially Public Service resistance to a change in government programs or direction. One can imagine how a deputy minister or assistant deputy minister would react to the abolition of a major program they had developed. An example is the National Energy Program. If a new government wanted to abandon that program and put in place a policy that was the exact opposite, the person who developed the program might find reasons why he should not implement that quickly.

Fifth, it would provide a greater degree and recognition of the accountability that senior officials should accept for their administrative actions. When deputy or assistant deputy ministers come before a committee, Members often cannot get answers as to why policies are in place, why policies have not been put into place or why they are in place in the manner in which they are. The deputy or assistant deputy minister constantly say that you can only ask the Minister. It is the deputy and assistant deputy ministers who often put the policies in place and it should be they who answer the questions. If this Bill were accepted, they could answer for the Minister. They would be an extension of the political arm of the Party.

Last, it would reduce to a minimum clashes between the administrative and legislative arms of Government. When a government is elected by the people with its program, it should be allowed to put that program in place as quickly as possible. Allowing the Government to choose its senior public servants would enhance that ability.

Some may ask how we could implement this program with what is now in place. They say it would put possibly 300 people out of a job. I do not suggest that would happen. Many assistant deputy ministers would stay on because they are very capable and helpful. There are ways of doing this. We now have in place the executive interchange program. It allows people to come into the Public Service through sponsors. We have the use of service contracts and options such as term employment. It is essential to ensure that people who come