

There is a statutory list of priorities. Of course, there is another list that is called administrative priorities. It deals with the reorganization, privatization, decentralization, and language training courses. It also includes people whose spouses have moved to another city. There may be serious consideration given to transferring the other spouse on a priority basis.

The Bill would give the Public Service Commission a priority list No. 2 for virtually any job. The Commission will be responsible for determining the qualifications that an individual must meet for a job. The aim of the Bill appears to be to provide some form of job security for our employees. I agree with that. I compliment my colleague on what I may call his philanthropic objective. I do not say this pejoratively in any sense.

In response to the Member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Ellis), I would say that if the aim of the Bill is to give some benefits to the staff of Members who cease to be Members or who are defeated in an election, I can assure him that it would benefit those on his side of the aisle more than those on this side, because we intend to make sure in a few weeks from now that some of the benches on the other side are vacated.

Mr. Ellis: How many weeks?

Mr. Gauthier: A few weeks.

As I said earlier, the Bill proposes to amend the Public Service Employment Act. Currently, Section 37 of that Act gives priority for employment to the staff of ministers and the Leader of the Opposition. I understand that in the last year three or four people from that office benefited from that section. It also provides for priority in instances where a person was a public servant previously. It also provides priority should someone serve a Minister or one of the other groups for a period of three years or more. The Act specifies that such a priority, however, is only given in the instances of employment as a special assistant, executive assistant or private secretary.

When I first read the Bill which we are discussing today, I thought that it appeared similar to the current Section 37 of the Public Service Employment Act which I have been explaining. I thought it was an expansion of those protections and benefits. Upon closer inspection, however, I feel that the Bill would provide greater protection to our staff than that which is accorded currently to the staff of Ministers and the Leaders of both the Government and the Opposition in the other place and here. There is a fundamental difference. Bill C-215 does not explain how the amendment affects employees whose Member of Parliament may have vacated his seat for any reason. It simply states that, after three years in the employ of a Member of Parliament, Clause 4(1) of amended Section 37 would be triggered and the individual in question would be able to ask for priority consideration from the Commission. This is not actually the case in existing law. The Minister in question whose staff has been with him for three years, would have to be either relieved of his ministerial duties, resign from his duties, or leave the House before the clause in

Public Service Employment Act

question would be triggered, and give his former staff the priority listing which was accorded by this statutory clause.

There is one additional problem which I hope the committee will consider when, hopefully, it studies this Bill. It is that the Bill applies only to the House of Commons. Perhaps we would want to extend this privilege to the other place as well where there are also very devoted people who work for Senators and who are, in my view, equally entitled to this kind of consideration if a Senator dies after three years or perhaps removes himself from office.

In closing, I will say that I view this Bill favourably. I think it is a good initiative. I suggest that there are difficulties with the triggering of the priority listing. If the staff of Members of Parliament are to be included, they should be included in the same way as the staff of a Minister, that is, that the staff should be allowed to exercise that priority if a Member leaves this place either of his own volition or as a result of being defeated. I believe that this should also apply to the Senate.

I would like to hear further comments in the committee with respect to the other amendments, which possibly could be made to improve the Bill.

Having said that, I would like to state very firmly that I think the Bill is appropriate and would give our staff more security and well deserved consideration in the near future.

Mr. Blaker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not wish to abuse the time of the House or of the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), but I think there was a misunderstanding. The Bill simply provides that the staff of members who have been staff for three years will come under the qualifications of Section 37 of the Public Service Employment Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair is uncertain about what the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary is attempting to do at this time. Does he wish to put a question to the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier?

Mr. Blaker: No, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure that I am qualified to speak on a point of order in this regard. I will give way to you and to Hon. Members. However, the Bill is relatively clear. It refers to the Public Service Employment Act.

Mr. Garnet M. Bloomfield (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on a very important subject today, that of giving some degree of job protection to the staff of a Member of Parliament.

Bill C-215 proposes to amend the Public Service Employment Act to provide staff of Members of Parliament the same priority to be appointed to the Public Service that Ministers' staffs now enjoy. An analysis of the wording of the proposed amendment to the Public Service Employment Act indicates that, if approved, it would provide priority for appointment, without competition, for all staff of Members of Parliament who were formerly employed in the Public Service, are quali-