

When the report and suggestions of the Civil Service Commission are received later this year my colleagues will decide on what we can and should recommend to Parliament. I would hope that, as a result, we will succeed in obtaining in Canada a thoroughly modern Civil Service system based however upon same principles which have received the support of Canadians over the past half century.

In this revision of the Civil Service Act, there should not be any alteration of the independent status of the Civil Service Commission as a quasi-judicial tribunal. The Commission is not an arm of the government to which Ministers can give direction -- it derives its powers and basic instructions from Parliament to whom it reports through the Secretary of State. Its members are appointed by the Government, as judges are, but they hold office during good behaviour for a minimum of ten years, unless removed by a joint address of both Houses of Parliament -- about as secure a protection as one can get to ensure independence. We are fortunate in having in the Commission persons of outstanding ability and long records of outstanding work as career civil servants with a wide variety of experience.

Our revised Civil Service Act, I am sure, will preserve the vital principles of the merit system which have been in our legislation for the past half century. Nowadays we take it for granted that Civil Servants are appointed and promoted on the basis of ability. We must not forget however, that this depends upon having the right principles in our law and the effective application of them by an impartial tribunal. This we must preserve.

The Public Service is so important, and its work affects all Canadians so directly, that we need the best men and women in it that we can secure. That is the positive aspect of the merit system -- to ensure the selection of those who will do the best job.

I am confident that when our Service is selected and advanced on the grounds of merit, it will be found to be broadly representative of the people of Canada from coast to coast. The methods of selection and recruitment should be devised to ensure that all Canadians of the necessary ability shall have a fair chance to enter the Service and to advance so far as opportunities and their capacities permit. I know that the Civil Service Commissioners are conscious of this need for a truly national service and they will have the support of the Government in achieving it.

I want to turn now to some of the matters with which you as an organization are more directly concerned -- pay, other conditions of employment, and the role of the organization of Civil Servants in dealing with such questions.

My colleagues and I sensed immediately after taking office that some changes and improvements in these matters were necessary. One of the first things we did as a government was to carry through a revision of salaries. One of the next things we did was to have the Civil Service Commission establish a Pay Research Bureau that would produce better information on which to base decisions concerning salary revisions -- better information than we found was available to the Commission, the Treasury or the Government. That Bureau is now operating effectively. In its operations it is assisted by an advisory committee on which there are representatives of Civil Servants' organizations -- including your own. The results of its research will be available to your organization as well as to the Commission