

might be reasonable to say that the maximum we should be training at any one time, as a reasonable choice for the Prime Minister, is between 18 and 20. That would be three times the maximum number ever promoted at one time. It would be equally reasonable to pursue the old tradition—in fact, at one time it was pursued by the Liberals—that when a Parliamentary Secretary is appointed, that is the purpose of the appointment. Those named as Parliamentary Secretary would be looked at as potential future Cabinet Ministers. For years that was understood.

When the practice changed to become an automatic, routine, by rote appointment, which was for a maximum of two years, every Member of the backbench could then expect to be appointed a Parliamentary Secretary, receive the extra money and then pass on to something else, usually not being a Parliamentary Secretary. That was the end of it. In my view, that seriously eroded the value of the institution of Parliamentary Secretaries. It turned it into a partisan plum appointment, not what it should be, which is the development of successor Ministers.

There is now a capacity for 27 Parliamentary Secretaries. The Government claims the capacity should be 31. To show the ludicrousness of this portion as clearly as I can, it is to say that the Secretary of State for External Affairs, who has a Parliamentary Secretary, is to get two Ministers to assist him because he needs help. The present Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) may need help on another level, but in an administrative parliamentary way he needs two Ministers or Ministers of State to assist him. It does not seem right to argue that, having given him two new Ministers, you have to create the potential for two Parliamentary Secretaries.

It is administratively impossible to argue that we need to go from a Minister with a Parliamentary Secretary to three Ministers with three Parliamentary Secretaries. Nobody in his right mind could believe that the workload has tripled. That in a nutshell is my view of the lunacy of the proposal to increase the number of Parliamentary Secretaries.

It should also be clear to the House that there is nothing in the law that prevents the Government or the Prime Minister from appointing Parliamentary Secretaries to any Minister at any time in any number. All the law stipulates is a maximum number of Parliamentary Secretaries. If you read *Hansard*, you find that two or three Ministers of State today have Parliamentary Secretaries. While they do not count in creating the total, it has been deemed necessary to give them assistance given their workload. That is an honourable tradition.

Not long ago, in Great Britain I met with the Parliamentary Secretary to the equivalent of our Secretary of State for External Affairs, who is at the same time the Parliamentary Secretary to one of the Ministers of State. Their equivalent to our Secretary of State for External Affairs has three Parliamentary Secretaries cross appointed, even though there are not many Parliamentary Secretaries. That is an application of resources to a work-load problem. It is fair and reasonable.

If the Prime Minister thought it were necessary, he could in law appoint all 27 of the existing Parliamentary Secretaries to

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himself, if he thought he needed the help. Of the 27 he could appoint three to the Minister of Finance. Never have we seen the people involved used in that way by this Government. Nobody has come to the House to say that the Minister does not have a Parliamentary Secretary and needs one. All they have said is "We have 27 and we are now arguing that we need 31". Nobody has put that argument here or in committee.

It is quite clear that the objective of the Bill is simply to increase the number. There was no justification given to us in terms of workload or time demands to increase the number of people who shall receive extra pay in the House of Commons. Frankly, as a taxpayer and a citizen, I find that offensive.

On the Senate question, I differ to some degree with other Members of my Party. I am not as offended by the idea that a Member of the Senate could or should be a Parliamentary Secretary, to be perfectly honest. We should speak on these questions as Parliamentarians. I can be persuaded, if necessary, that the Government of the day may believe that it needs to present its case more adequately in the Senate than it is presenting it. It could argue that the Deputy Leader or Leader in the Senate, who does not have a Parliamentary Secretary, should perhaps have one.

The only way to approach this issue is to say that if the argument being made to defend the increase in numbers is a workload issue, then show us the workload. It has never been shown to Members of the House of Commons or the committee. As someone who believes that our Party will soon be the Government and believes that we will be faced with the issue of how many Parliamentary Secretaries we will appoint—in fact I was past Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister in the Clark Government—I say there is no justification for an increase in the number of Parliamentary Secretaries. I urge the Government to reconsider its decision that for some reason we always need more and more Ministers of the Crown and Parliamentary Secretaries without ever at least justifying that recommendation to spend more of the public's money in this way. That at least ought to be defended on a workload basis.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, it is my purpose to speak in favour of the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) which would have the effect of deleting Clause 25 from the Bill before us. That would mean that the law respecting the appointment and pay of Parliamentary Secretaries would remain as it is now. The Government would still have the opportunity to appoint Parliamentary Secretaries to each and any Minister up to a certain maximum. I think that the present law is quite suitable for their purposes and will prove quite suitable for our purposes when we form the Government in the near future.

● (1700)

First, I want to deal with a minor item in Clause 25(3). I am not clear as to what exactly this means. It says:

A Parliamentary Secretary shall be appointed to hold office for a period not exceeding 12 months from the date of his appointment—