

Employment in Public Service

enjoys one of the highest reputations on the international scene. Bill C-181 will make it possible for the Public Service Commission to maintain this tradition of excellence; it provides for greater flexibility and discretion on the part of the commission to adapt its methods and procedures in order that it might respond quickly and intelligently to changing demands and circumstances.

The third objective is to accommodate the establishment of collective bargaining in the public service. Bill C-181 relieves the commission of its responsibilities in matters of pay and conditions of employment, as it is more proper for them to be assigned to the agency which must represent the employer's interests at the bargaining table. It was considered essential to the preservation of the commission's independence on the one hand and the preservation of the merit system on the other that none of the commission's powers and duties be involved in the bargaining process.

Mr. Chairman, a number of amendments were made to Bill C-181 while it was the subject of review by the special joint committee. The majority of these amendments were made in response to suggestions of the various staff associations who presented briefs and comments on the proposed legislation. The government is in agreement with all the committee amendments to Bill C-181 and I believe that Bill C-181 will be a better statute for them.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Mr. Chairman, parliament has no duty more important in my view than to ensure to young Canadians that a career in the public service shall be attractive and rewarding. Year by year, government looms larger and larger in the life of every Canadian, and if we are to have enlightened, forward looking, progressive administration the public service must be able to recruit the very best from the ablest young Canadian men and women. Service to the state must be judged and assessed as the very highest form of service with genuine rewards and satisfactions attached thereto.

That is why the bill now before us is so important. In all the discussion about collective bargaining for the public service little attention has been paid to the fact that this measure involves a convulsive change in the familiar pattern of personnel recruitment and management which has been in effect since Sir Robert Borden sponsored the Civil Service Act of 1918. The introduction at that time of the merit system was the foundation

upon which we have built our truly great civil service.

In 1918 the Civil Service Commission was made the guardian of the merit system with a threefold role: first, recruitment and promotion; second, classification and establishment; third, recommendations in respect of salary and wage levels. Under this bill, only the first of these remains with the new Public Service Commission. Classification is now a matter for Treasury Board and salary and wage levels a matter for collective bargaining. Whether the complete freedom to the new Public Service Commission to concentrate upon recruitment and promotion will result in greater efficiency and competency in this field remains to be seen.

The bill has received careful study in the joint special committee and with the amendments made by that committee is considerably improved. The staff associations and others presented comprehensive and thoughtful briefs which were most helpful. The expert guidance of the chairman of the Civil Service Commission, John J. Carson, and one of the commissioners, Mr. Sylvain Cloutier, contributed greatly to our deliberations. Both were knowledgeable, articulate witnesses and the latter fascinated some of us by his ready facility to express nuances of meaning in both languages. But I emphasize that the bill is far from ideal and still contains frustrating imperfections.

• (5:10 p.m.)

A major change achieved by this bill is the inclusion for the first time under the merit system of appointments of applicants for prevailing rates positions, and of ships' crews and officers. I support this change fully and believe it will accrue to the benefit of the public service and as well of all politicians. Not all members of the house, I am certain, will agree that the abandonment of political patronage in the prevailing rates positions is good. I do not profess this afternoon to speak for anyone but myself. But from 1957 to 1963 I had the experience of interviewing over 16,000 persons seeking patronage employment, and I am convinced that this type of patronage parade is neither helpful to the politician, to his political organization nor to the public service. Few of us in this chamber have any training or aptitude for personnel administration, and I believe the public interest will benefit when prevailing rates employment is taken out of the hands of members of parliament and the defeated candidates of the party in office.