

Government Orders

Norm Spectre being forced to be the apologist for this crowd.

One of the hallmarks of our bureaucracy, before this government took office, was that people such as those I have named and others were always above the fray. They gave advice to the government but they did not speak for the government.

We have seen that change, change for the worse. We have seen the public servant become politicized. Now we see the heavy hand of the government trying to institutionalize that politicization. We see it now say "it is not enough". It will not be required from now on that the individual applying for a job be the best qualified. He will just be one of the qualified people.

This opens the door. This opens Pandora's box to all kinds of abuse, to appointments on anything but merit, to flagrant patronage. It is not something we have had in our Public Service over the years and it is not something we should allow right now.

There are some good things in this bill. My colleagues, in particular my friend from Ottawa West, have already made reference to these.

We will oppose the principle of the bill at second reading because of the reasons I and other colleagues have stated. We do not oppose a reform of the Public Service. What we do oppose is this rating of the merit principle and a number of other issues that my colleagues will mention in debate. That is why we have been saying: "Let's not throw the whole thing out. Let's put it to a special committee".

My friend from Ottawa West in her wisdom has moved the motion which does not throw out as such, but buys time for this government on the heels of the court's decision, on the heels of the advice of the public accounts committee, on the heels of the advice by many dozens of members in this House, that this government come to its senses and push this issue to committee in order to get some advice and come back with a better crafted bill that will serve this country and serve the people who are part of a very magnificent Public Service.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that

the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Ottawa Centre—Immigration; the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk—Pork Industry; the hon. member for Don Valley East—Metro Toronto; the hon. member for St. Boniface—Education.

• (1620)

[English]

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, I wish somebody would get up and organize a crowd for me because they do not seem to last long on the government side, with two exceptions.

I want to begin by saying that I have heard speakers from all sides of the House on this bill saying nobody is against reform of the Public Service. That may be motherhood to old members, but it is not to me unless and until the reform contains the maximum participation and involvement of representatives of the Public Service employees. If they do not have any say in that reform, they do not have much of a union.

There is an old saying by a very famous Welsh politician, made when he was inaugurating the National Health Services in Great Britain in 1945–46. All the Liberals, all the Tories, all the editorial writers, and all the experts predicted it would not work. It would be disastrous. All the people would be rushing to the doctors' offices and to the hospitals and abusing the plan, et cetera, et cetera. There were predictions of a public which would destroy the National Health Service before it got off the ground.

That famous Welsh politician, bless his Labour Party heart, made a statement in the House of Commons and in a little book called *In Place of Fear*. That was: "If you want to get the best behaviour out of people, the first thing you have to do is give them a chance to behave". If you want to get the best behaviour and the best service out of your Public Service, you give them a chance to behave. You give them the fullest opportunity to take part in any so-called reform of the Public Service.

I want to say something about contracting out because it has become a real growth industry in Ottawa and some provincial capitals. We have thousands of extremely competent people in our Public Service, both federally and provincially, who have such a variety of expertise and