

Motions

other means that has been used in the past by which Parliament has enforced any form of accountability on the commission. I recognize that under the new committee system the Government Operations Committee, or some other committee, could in fact call the commission to come forward for a series of more protracted hearings, perhaps in the fall of each year when the pressure of Estimates is not upon us. That is something that I would recommend as a stopgap measure at least. I think we should think it through.

I will give an example of what has disturbed me in particular. Some two and one-half years ago the commission issued a set of guidelines with respect to the political activity of public servants which was circulated throughout the Public Service. In the opinion of many people, myself included, these guidelines went substantially beyond the letter and spirit of the Public Service Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Employment Act, which Acts were meant to govern political activity. They were guidelines and not regulations. The committee of Parliament which deals with regulations issued a very stiff report that was severely critical of the Public Service Commission, in that it had not put this matter into a regulation which could then be considered by a committee of Parliament. However, the Public Service Commission did nothing about that. It did not honour Parliament's word when a parliamentary committee told it that it was out of court in terms of how it had acted. There was no action, and no apparent means for taking action, by any committee of this House, or by Parliament itself, to get the Public Service Commission to act in that particular way.

I know that my time has almost expired. I think that these are important questions. I hope that they can and will be pursued over the coming months, perhaps at a time when we have another report from the Public Accounts Committee relative to the September 30 deadline for reports back from the commission on this particular report.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to address some thoughts that have occurred to me over the past little while concerning the tenth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I listened with interest to my colleague, the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy), with whom I have served on the Public Accounts Committee. Because of his constituency he has a greater understanding than many Members of the House with respect to the workings of the Public Service Commission.

I remember taking a look at the remarks of the Auditor General and his comprehensive audit of the Public Service Commission. At that time I remember that the committee was concerned about the problems of staffing. As a committee we addressed our thoughts to what might be done to improve the staffing and a simplification and condensation of the rules and regulations as suggested by the Auditor General. Today I want to spend some time discussing the staffing points.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General pointed out in his report, and I think it was referred to in the report of the committee, that authority for 98 per cent of the appointments made in the federal Public Service has been delegated to the departments. In other words, the responsibility for implementing the staffing system has been delegated to the various departments. I am sure that all Members of the House would agree with me that there are very few managerial decisions which are as important to the effective functioning of a department as the question of selection of staff. The quality of the work of any department depends upon the quality of the members. For this reason alone I think that the managers have to devote a considerable amount of time to thinking through the selection process.

As an aside, we just concluded debate with respect to Bill C-45. I appeared before a committee in the other place just this morning on that Bill. It is a Bill which was supported by all Members of the House *vis-à-vis* the staff of the House of Commons, the Library of Parliament and the Senate. It is a Bill which was brought forward by the Government and worked on by members of all Parties. I pay particular tribute to the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre and to the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) who made very viable contributions to the work of the committee.

What we were trying to do was take a hard look at the staffing of the House of Commons. We were trying to set in place a procedure by which there could be bargaining rights for the employees and by which they would have an opportunity to have grievance procedures and independent arbitration concerning matters that could not be settled on the way up.

That speaks to our concern not only as Members of Parliament *vis-à-vis* the employees on the Hill but *vis-à-vis* the different departments as regards the importance of the selection process for employees, the structuring of jobs, language requirements and the essential qualifications. The key to the efficient and effective staffing of any Public Service department is this initial planning and preparation. With respect to Bill C-45, we have built into it a year's grace provision, shall we say, to allow for the proper planning and preparation of the implementation of the classification system. I know that under any administration the Public Service managers take, and have taken seriously, the question of staffing. They are very much aware that to have proper employee morale and productivity they have to pay attention to that particular item. It is a complex matter. It is time consuming and has many well-defined steps which must be taken along the way. There is no question that there are still efforts required to streamline and improve the system to make it more flexible and responsive to Public Service needs.

I would like to quote, if I may, from the commission's annual report for 1985 which states in part:

Throughout 1985, the Commission, mindful that restraint in the allocation and management of government resources has affected personnel administration, continued to explore the scope of possible changes to the Public Service Employment Act and Regulations. Many of these proposed changes have as a