

This bill originated from an all-party committee, and originally from a Liberal member for whom I just substituted my name. I think if the hon. member is going to enter into this debate in a fair way, she has an obligation to tell the truth.

**Mrs. Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to apologize. If it is my duty to be at other places, and I am not here to listen to all the words of wisdom presented by my hon. colleague.

The fact is that the bill is here in the name of a NDP member, and I will address it on that basis.

I was surprised to hear my hon. colleague mention that he is introducing this bill without any consultation with the unions, that he hopes will take place subsequently.

The hon. member and his party's critic for the Public Service must be aware that in fact the major unions of the Public Service have taken a very strong position. They want to see the Public Service Employment Act amended not to further restrict free and open competition for positions but to make those very things subject to negotiation at the bargaining table.

That position was stated as recently as yesterday morning by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada at a press conference releasing its paper *Dialogue with Parliament*. What it wishes to do is recognize that the Public Service Employment Act is now much more restricted in the rights it accords to employees than other labour legislation, simply because they happen to be employees of the public of Canada.

It severely restricts its right to negotiate. What the unions are seeking to do now that the bargaining process in the Public Service has achieved some maturity after approximately 22 years is to make such things as hiring processes, promotion processes and firing processes subject to negotiation at the bargaining table.

I question whether the members of those unions would find this the kind of provision that they would wish to negotiate into their contracts. Also they wish to expand their right to appeal, to grieve and to set up a much more legitimate process when there are objections from employees or their unions to the way in which an appointment, a promotion, a dismissal or a transfer has been made.

### *Private Members' Business*

The member should be aware that at the moment there is a significant problem of morale and stagnation within the Public Service. One of the reasons is that there is very little room for movement in the Public Service. There is an aging workforce. For people already within the Public Service to move on to new opportunities and new levels of responsibility is extremely difficult.

As a result, the Public Service is losing many bright and capable people to the private sector or to other career opportunities simply because they cannot be given the opportunity to have new responsibilities and new experiences within the Public Service.

Making another several hundred people on a regular basis qualified to be parachuted in over and above those people who are there now looking for opportunities does not seem to me a wise thing to do. Nor does this seem to be an opportune time to do it with those kinds of problems existing in the Public Service.

I do not think any of us can ignore concerns about patronage in the Public Service. The recently released reports of Public Service 2000 includes move by the government without discussion by Parliament. Their wish to make the appointment of people and the moving of people around in the Public Service more a matter of managerial discretion not open to appeal and not open to examination. This has already created some significant consternation in the Public Service about the possibility of people being moved, based on their personal relationship with their supervisor or manager rather than on their abilities and on their job interests.

• (1830 )

Given the scepticism that exists now among the Public Service unions about the fact that all these changes are being imposed from on high by management without them being part of the process that comes to solutions as to how best to reform the Public Service, I think we need to be very cautious about adding to that scepticism and adding to that cynicism.

The fact that ministers' offices have this privilege right now, the fact that in recent revisions Treasury Board has doubled the number of people who can be appointed out of a minister's office and directly into the Public Service does not necessarily make an expansion of this a good idea.