

doctor told her he thought her back was well enough for her to go back to work, which meant that her benefits would cease. When she arrived at work here on the Hill she was told that her employers did not think she was fit to work and they would not pay her. She is no longer eligible for benefits, no longer able to work, and she has no place else to go. There is no grievance procedure except for some Member of Parliament trying to catch the Speaker's attention and having him put some pressure on the people concerned. With an organization they will have a grievance procedure. They can use the combined weight of all employees to argue for a particular person.

We know from listening to employees that there are discrepancies in the hiring practices and, because there is no grievance procedure, those discrepancies continue. If and when the five or six units who have applied for certification under the Canada Labour Code finally obtain the right to negotiate, they will be in a position to make certain that hiring procedures are regulated in a way that everyone understands. We can then avoid the kind of things we have had brought to our attention, such as the case of a technician being hired for a position at below the advertised salary level. He worked for a year and a half to reach that salary level and finally did so. Another position opened up in his same unit, another employee with exactly the same qualifications as the first employee was hired, but he was hired at the same salary level that the first one fought for a year and a half to get. These kinds of discrepancies bother our employees. I think they bother all of us when we realize there is inequitable treatment with no visible reason for it.

It makes little sense for us to be imposing more legislation regarding hiring practices and organizational structure for employees of Parliament in the form of Bill C-45. We have seen the Canada Labour Code being applied, and much effort has gone into organizing over the last three or four years. There have been court appeals. The legislative route is being followed, slowly but it is still being followed. It seems extremely unjust for us, particularly on equality day, to be imposing this much reduced form of rights on our employees when they are attempting to organize under the provisions of the Canada Labour Code.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): Questions or comments.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Humboldt—Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) mentioned that this was equality day for many groups in our society. It is interesting that the Government picked this particular day to move this legislation forward. It is also interesting that the Government had five months to move on this legislation and it would have done so earlier if it had believed it was serious legislation. That is rather ironic because we are now in a situation where the Government has not treated its own legislation seriously. Can you imagine introducing legislation in the late fall of last year, bringing it forward for one or two days' debate, and then

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

postponing further debate for a full four months? Yet that is what has happened.

Neither has the Government been serious in its negotiations with its employees on the Hill. It has used the courts to delay negotiating. It waited until the Canada Labour Relations Board certified the workers on the Hill, appealed that decision, lost the appeal, and is now appealing it further. Yet the Government has not shown the credibility involved in sitting down with its own workers to find out what kind of legislation would be acceptable.

There is no question of the Government's right to introduce legislation which it thinks is necessary. There is no question that the Government has a right to introduce its own legislation, based on a court decision, to change a process. What I find ironic is that the Government has spent so much time in doing nothing that I wonder if the Hon. Member would care to communicate whether he feels the Government is really negotiating in bad faith with its employees.

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, on the face of it, it does seem the Government is not serious about negotiating. The various court actions taken as employees began to organize under the auspices of the Canada Labour Code indicate that the Government intends to fight the effort to organize on the Hill as far as it can. This move to introduce Bill C-45 was a legislative effort to back up the legal efforts in the courts. For that reason it probably would go some way to explaining why this legislation comes forward in fits and starts. I think it is somehow being used as part of the varied arsenal of the Government in its fight against the application by five or six units to organize and get their first contract.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I listened with some attention to the Hon. Member's remarks. He, like his colleagues in the NDP, has a definition of a designated employee. I want to know exactly where he stands on the question of essential employees. As I said this afternoon, under the Public Service Staff Relations Act, designated employees are those whose duty consists in whole or in part of duties the performance of which at or after any specific period of time are or will be necessary in the interests of the safety or security of the public. We could change all that and say: "The safety or security of Parliament". Given that the NDP Members' position on this issue is, I take it, that they favour the right to strike as a condition of Bill C-45, I wonder whether the Hon. Member would cross a picket line set up outside here consisting of messengers, truck drivers, maintenance people or anyone else. Would he cross that picket line? I would like to know the answer to that from his Party.

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, I have been involved in a few settlements of labour agreements.

An Hon. Member: On whose side?

Mr. Althouse: On the management side. Generally speaking, the definitions are drawn up quite clearly within the contract