

message of the Council of the Conference of Bishops which just came out today, which again, in harmony with recent statements from the Vatican, reaffirms as a basic tenet of Catholic teaching the right of employees to have a union, to speak collectively, to bargain collectively and to have that kind of collective voice in determining what their working conditions should be. Surely in a free and democratic society like we have this country we in the House of Commons should do our best to try and respect those basic rights rather than working in the other direction. Unfortunately, I fear that there are too many Members in the Conservative back-benches who do not understand that, who are unsympathetic to the desire and need of employees, particularly in large organizations like the House of Commons—to have a union to represent them and, therefore, who have been putting pressure on the Government, and on you, Mr. Speaker, and on the House of Commons, to resist in every way possible the extension of adequate collective bargaining rights.

The only hope for Bill C-45 is that in good faith the legislative committee which looks at this Bill will consider it very thoughtfully and very seriously. At the very least, and I recognize that some members, even if I disagree with them, may have hesitation about the full range of powers under the Canada Labour Code, I believe the employees of the House of Commons should have bargaining rights equivalent to those enjoyed by other employees of the Public Service of Canada. That is the least we can do to the extent that we improve those bargaining rights for employees of the Public Service of Canada, that framework should be extended to employees of the House of Commons. I would urge and plead with those Members of the legislative committee who are here for the debate right now, including the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister, that they consider amendments in a thoughtful and constructive way in order to try to improve a Bill which is a bad Bill, a Bill that I am afraid we in our Party find to be unacceptable.

**Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-45 and to express on behalf of my colleagues our appreciation of the words of the Member who just spoke. I think we find ourselves, in not a rare instance, but nevertheless too rare, in total agreement with the views that have just been expressed.

Bill C-45 is, in the final analysis, the product of a profound misunderstanding by Members of Parliament of the legitimate aspirations, the legitimate demand for basic rights by the 3,000 people who make this place function. Given the very nature of the institution, the adversarial nature of the chamber, the Commons, I believe the 3,000 employees involved serve us and the country very well. Why then is it that these employees should be denied the same kind of basic rights enjoyed by every other member of the Public Service of Canada? Why is it that as a Government we would seek to rest behind the decision of the court with respect to whether or not employees can be covered by the Canada Labour Code, when

*Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act*

in the final analysis the highest court in this land in determining, enshrining and in protecting our citizens' rights—including those 3,000 citizens who service this Hill—is indeed Parliament itself.

• (1120)

In my province of Newfoundland we are experiencing a very destructive and acrimonious labour strike. While one cannot easily assign blame for that strike, because two sides are always involved in a dispute, that action occurred fundamentally because the Government assumed the worst case scenario that might happen with the people who worked for the provincial Government of Newfoundland if the union were given proper collective bargaining rights. In its paranoid consideration of what would be the worst scenario if these employees were given collective bargaining rights, it designated 49 per cent of every bargaining unit as essential and wiped away the fundamental principle inherent in the right to collective bargaining. That is what Bill C-45 does to the employees on Parliament Hill. It singles out 3,000 employees of the Government of Canada who service Members of Parliament.

We have decided as Members of Parliament that we are unique, more important and more sacred than all other Canadians who are served by the Public Service. We have decided to implement special measures which we believe will give us protection. By taking away the rights of the 3,000 employees of this place, we assume the worst possible scenario in the case of those 3,000 employees who service Parliament Hill. We assume that there will be the worst possible abuse, in our judgment, of the rights to which they are entitled. The fact is that we are satisfying our paranoia by denying them their basic rights. That is wrong and cannot be justified.

The unions representing the 3,000 employees on the Hill have said that they would, in effect, go so far as to forfeit the right to strike if Bill C-45 included a strong binding arbitration procedure. Therefore, we are not dealing with a group that wants the right to shut down Parliament Hill. We are dealing with a group that wants the same fundamental rights enjoyed by any other groups of federal civil servants in this country.

Our failure to amend this legislation or ensure that the employees on Parliament Hill fall within the guidelines of the Canada Labour Code and the Canada Labour Relations Board is an act of cowardice on the part of Members of Parliament. Furthermore, it represents an assumption of motives on the part of the employees of Parliament Hill which they frankly do not deserve. When one looks at the long history of service provided by employees on Parliament Hill, there is nothing to suggest that our employees on Parliament Hill deserve anything but our appreciation, our respect, and our determination to ensure that they enjoy the same rights and protections as every other Canadian who is in the employ of the Crown.

I plead with those Members opposite who will sit on the legislative committee on Bill C-45 to do what they know in their own hearts and souls is the right thing. I ask those