

Public Service Collective Bargaining

The Prime Minister this afternoon told us of the consequential amendments which will be required to the Civil Service Act and the Financial Administration Act. What I do not understand is why the resolutions in respect of these amendments are not now on the order paper. Will these amending bills also be referred to the special committee? If so, I venture to suggest they should have been on the order paper this afternoon and should have been brought forward. Personally I believe it is imperative that the special committee should have before it from the outset the full package of the government's proposals. I do not think we should start our deliberations in the special committee until we have before us the complete package of the government's proposals.

The institution of collective bargaining will not create a bed of roses either for the government or the staff associations or indeed for the person most involved, the public servant himself. I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that sincerity of purpose and mutual good will, plus not a little bit of patient understanding, will be prerequisites of its success. But I think this resolution does constitute a very major advance in personnel administration. I endorse wholeheartedly the principle of the resolution and would assure the Prime Minister that we on this side of the chamber who will be members of the special committee will take full advantage of his offer in relation to amendments and will work diligently to ensure that the procedures and techniques are the most advanced and enlightened that this parliament can possibly devise.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Chairman, the members of this party have long advocated and supported the introduction of legislation which would provide full and complete collective bargaining rights for all government employees and employees of all government agencies. Today, in introducing the resolution preceding the necessary legislation to provide for collective bargaining, the Prime Minister has put on the calendar what could well be a red letter day in the history of the Canadian public service.

As all members know, we have been for some years far behind many other countries in providing this type of legislation. Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and several other countries have for decades had legislation providing for collective bargaining procedures for the public service. In Canada we have been slow in getting around to this.

[Mr. Bell (Carleton).]

The first province to pass such legislation was Saskatchewan which in 1945 made provision for the entire public service to come within the purview of the Trade Union Act and extended to government employees all the rights and privileges which were enjoyed by all other employees within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. I am only sorry that we have taken so long to follow this lead.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Having said that, this does not in any way lessen the sincerity of my commendation to the Prime Minister and to his cabinet for the great forward step which is being initiated by virtue of the legislation to be put before us. I am sure that it must afford the Prime Minister some satisfaction, having himself had some connection with the civil service of Canada, to think that he has played a major role in the steady advancement of the public service of this country, which began with Sir Robert Borden. He was followed by the late William Lyon Mackenzie King when he was prime minister of Canada, and who in my opinion played a very important role in developing the civil service of Canada, establishing its independence and raising its standards. Today we have another Liberal Prime Minister introducing collective bargaining legislation. If it is effective, as I hope it will be, then the Prime Minister will have won for himself a place in the history of this forward march of the civil service of Canada.

I shall not attempt to discuss in any detail the proposals which the Prime Minister has made, first of all because I should like to examine them more closely and, second, because I should like to see the legislation. We will be able to make a contribution when the bill comes down. However, I should like to say one or two things about the whole process of collective bargaining.

First of all, any legislation which is brought into this house should give to government employees the same rights and privileges as are now enjoyed by other employees anywhere else in Canada. For too long we Canadians have accepted the concept that public servants are in some way or other second class citizens, that they ought not to have the same rights and privileges as their fellow workers. I have never seen any justification for this attitude. I can see no difference between a worker who is employed by General Motors and one who is employed by the government of Canada or any of the government's agencies. I hope that when this