

Government Orders

In fact, a great deal of the problems in terms of morale, under-staffing problems, and in terms of simply not having the Public Service we otherwise would have today can find their origins, the germ of these problems, in those years, the mid-1970s.

I was wondering if the hon. member would care to reflect briefly for the further edification of this House on his experience in those days and what he thought at the time and, perhaps, what examples he can extrapolate from that which might be applicable today.

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, first of all it is very difficult to add to the well-rounded comments of the member condemning the previous Liberal government which in all seriousness was a terrible record and a real betrayal. It is amazing that the Prime Minister of the day could present himself in this House with such a betrayal of Canadians and of the Public Service.

One thing I would like to add is that I was certainly not aware that you, Mr. Speaker, had decided not to run again. I wish to identify myself with the remarks of one of your seatmates from the city of Edmonton on how much I have appreciated the support and fellowship and the great job you have done. I will terminate those remarks and wish you very well in the future. You have done a very good job here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Thank you.

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to participate in the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): You wish to debate?

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): That was my hope, yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There is no problem with that. I thought the hon. member for North Island—Powell River was the last speaker. However, I will recognize the hon. member for Edmonton East on debate.

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry for any confusion this may cause. I certainly do apologize for any disappointment this may cause on the other side of the House. I will attempt to keep my remarks pertinent.

We in the NDP caucus would like to support Bill C-101. We would like to come into this House and say

the process that led to the contents of Bill C-101 was an admirable process, that the consultation between employer and labour groups facilitated and undertaken by the government was an excellent process and that the results of that process are uniformly commendable and ought to be implemented.

We would like nothing better than to do that. In fact, with regard to many aspects of the bill we can do that. There are those amendments to part III of the labour code that provide for such things as protection for nursing and pregnant women in the work place, improved parental leave provisions, greater protection for injured workers and administrative improvements, which most working people would never have cause to come into contact with but will facilitate the process of labour relations in federally regulated work places. As well, there are those provisions that create new protection for worker's wages, especially in the event of company wind up. All of these things are commendable, praiseworthy, and eminently worthy of support.

• (1630)

If there were a way that we could vote on these elements and these alone then we would happily vote with the government in favour of the bill. These are elements worthy of support, worthy of passage, worthy of adoption and putting in place to govern labour relations in federally regulated work places.

We cannot in conscience do that, and not because of any of the matters I have mentioned thus far but because of an amendment to part I of the code which at a stroke renders the entire bill insupportable.

In addition to all of those good things, the bill seeks to place into the hands of the minister the right and the ability at any time by caprice to call for a vote of the bargaining unit on the last offer of the employer.

This means that when a bargaining unit is in the process of collective bargaining, when in other words the union representatives of the workers in a given work place are negotiating a new contract or amendments to an existing contract with an employer, any time that employer has made an offer, the minister at her or his discretion may decide for whatever reason that the employees represented by the union will now vote on that employer's offer.