

Government Orders

sumption Act? The parties were the Treasury Board and the Public Service Alliance of Canada. The Leader of the Opposition was in the cabinet.

• (1350)

There were two conciliation boards established and there were enforcement procedures, binding arbitration on the public sector. Where was the Leader of the Opposition?

[Translation]

The Leader of the Opposition was here. He voted yes to back to work legislation providing arbitration for public sector employees.

[English]

He was here. He voted yes and he put the public servants back to work. Where is he today? He is voting no. I ask why. All Canadians should ask why. The people of Quebec should ask why.

Could it be that he is trying to curry favour with the unions in Quebec? Could it be that he thinks they are so foolish, so naive, so stupid they will vote for separation because he turned his back on what he voted on in 1989? Could that be? I think not.

The people of Quebec who are out of work want to go back to work. The people in Windsor who are out of work want to go back to work. The people of Canada want to go back to work.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak for a few minutes on this very important matter. I want to say that Canada needs new labour relations and it needs a government capable of imposing leadership in this regard. Leadership in this regard means that it must establish that employers have rights, and so they do, but that employers must respect the rights of their employees.

In Quebec, we can say that we entered a new era of labour relations some ten years ago. This happened because we went through a major crisis and because employers and employees realized that they needed each other and that each had to respect the other so they could come to terms with the new economy.

The federal government could have shown the way today in this time of crisis, because this transformation in the economy is a time of crisis. It is showing the way backwards, back to a time before labour laws empowered workers to counterbalance this extremely powerful economic force ever so slightly.

We are entering an era where the economy seems to be the sole force. Only states, governments and parties would seem to be able to stop the relentless march of the force to globalize the economy that is sweeping everything in its path.

This is why we consider it so important right now for the government, for the government of this country we live in, to assume its responsibilities and affirm that there is more than just the economy. Yes, the economy is important, but people too are important and respect for people is important. It is true today for the unions, but tomorrow it will be true for individuals, who are not entitled to unionize or have no opportunity to do so; they too will be swept aside by the relentless advance of this force to globalize the economy.

People will have to stand up and let it be known that there is more than just the economy. The economy is important, but other things are important too.

The Minister of Labour had the opportunity to show that she considered the need for railways to be viable and competitive.

• (1355)

But, at the same time, she could have given the judge the mandate of looking at what the workers had gained over the years and of trying to reach a balance, so that when the workers returned to work, when they started to look to their future, they would envision co-operation between them and management.

Instead, she gave one mandate: short and long term viability and competitiveness, while keeping good labour-management relations in mind. Anyone with any knowledge whatsoever of labour relations knows that giving such a mandate to a judge, who has the last say, constitutes a major change of course.

I am sad to see that, instead of giving workers a minimum guarantee in one of her first laws, the Minister of Labour chose to give in to the government's commercial and financial demands.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Lalonde: It is regrettable and deplorable. I think that Quebecers will also remember this when they have to make important choices regarding their future. They will remember that the woman the government chose to lead the referendum fight was forced to use strong-arm tactics, was put in a situation where she could not even choose to be impartial, which was what we expected her to be.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments to make, of course, regarding an event in ancient history, December 14, 1989. Let us go way back when, back to an era where the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean championed different causes than those he defends today.

On December 14, 1989, this House adopted Bill C-149, bringing public servants back to work.

An hon. member: Who did this?

Mr. Boudria: A Conservative government. Just look at what was forced on recalcitrant workers at the time: a fine of \$500 to