

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

I must admit that I brought to the attention of the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) this particular case, not because I was concerned that the employee was being picked up by the scruff of his neck and slack of his pants and flung out the door effective July 1, Canada Day, not because I was concerned with him as an individual—and I am concerned with him as an individual—but because this particular employee was responsible for administering 70 federal job creation projects. He is one of only three or four in the Corner Brook office who manage an area 500 miles long with about 70,000 people and 300 projects. When he goes, effective July 1, by the scruff of his neck and the slack of his pants out the door there will be only three people left, which means that each of them will be responsible for administering 90 programs over an area 500 miles long. I was protesting his dismissal not only and not even because it was a terrible treatment to a human being but because in the process of doing it the federal Government was destroying its own job-creation program.

I brought the matter to the attention of the Minister, not on behalf of the employee but on behalf of the proper and rational expenditure of federal job creation programs and because by getting rid of this employee in Newfoundland the federal Government was making it impossible for the employment development branch to do its work. I still have not heard from the Minister, but I am patiently and hopefully, let me say, waiting.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. I want to say, because the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) is in the House—I do not know whether the hon. gentleman is aware of this, but I believe he is—that yesterday the Minister said that she was going to re-examine what was happening. In fact, she extended the time of the employees for two weeks. In this case I have to take my hat off to the Minister of Employment and Immigration for intervening—

Mr. Tobin: For two weeks.

Mr. Baker:—for that two week period. I have to do that. The Minister is going to deny that she intervened. She is going to deny and say: “No, I let my Department do what it had to do”. I have the official record. I even know when the phone call was made. The Minister personally intervened.

However, I want to ask the hon. gentleman a simple question. What would he like this Minister to do now, now that she has extended the employment time of these people for two weeks? Would he like the Minister to have additional information? Perhaps people work harder in Newfoundland than in a lot of other areas of Canada, the United States and around the world.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, that was both an informative and extremely thought-provoking question. I will attempt to answer it in the short time the Speaker will allot me.

First, I also take off my hat to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It points out that Members of Parliament who do their jobs sincerely, honestly, with a good heart, a good mind and a good soul can make a difference. The Minister listened to Members over here. Our hat is off for two weeks, Mr. Speaker. In two weeks if you see me with my hat back on, that is fair warning to the Minister.

What would I like the Minister to do? I have told the Minister privately that administering 70 projects over 20,000 or 30,000 square miles of territory is not like administering projects in downtown Toronto. The Minister knows that. She knows the difference. I would like to see those people reinstated but, more important, I would like to see them made permanent employees of the federal Government. This overuse of term employees is wrong. We have had employees in Newfoundland who have been term employees for 10 years. That is an abuse of the individual and it is time the overextended, overused term employee concept is picked up by the scruff of the neck, the slack of the pants and flung out the window.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans).

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with some patience, not a lot I must admit, to speeches in the last little while. I must confess to some confusion.

I took the opportunity to talk with those who are employed on Parliament Hill and who will be affected by this legislation. I spoke at some length over a number of months to a variety of individuals who represent what I would consider to be a good cross-section of the employment opportunities and the employment that would generally be affected by this legislation. They told me two things, and I think I owe it to the House to relay what I consider to be an important message.

They said that they felt the legislation as it was proposed was unsatisfactory. They said that it did not adequately reflect either the scope necessary to deal with the problems that they themselves believe they faced on an ongoing basis, and neither did it represent a sufficiently broad cross-section of the total occupational population of Parliament Hill. I will come back to that in a moment because the second thing they told me is of some importance when juxtaposed against the most recent two or three speeches. These people told me that the legislation goes much further than the Liberals ever went, but the one thing that disappointed them was that, after years and years and years of a Liberal Government, they had been unable to get that Government and that Party to move toward the recognition of the need for collective bargaining as a right for public servants who worked on Parliament Hill. I find it passing strange, in fact somewhat aggravating, that after years of forming the Government members of the now Official Opposition have the unmitigated gall to rise in this House of Commons and attempt to appear to defend the rights of the people who work for Parliament.