

*Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act*

country? Surely there is a kind of hypocrisy involved in such action which could lead the managers of the country, and much more so the workers and their unions, to wonder about the right of a Government through Parliament to impose on these various federal undertakings those standards when the Government of Canada was not ready to maintain the standards for itself.

We find now the question of the representation of workers on the Hill becoming a clear-cut issue when we see the Public Service Alliance pressing the organization of workers and seeking to establish before the Canada Relations Board that the Parliament Hill staff be regarded as a federal undertaking in the sense of bringing to bear the provisions of the Canada Labour Code.

● (1640)

What can we say about the fact that the Government's response to that was a transposition of the Public Service Staff Relations Act on these employees? In this way their rights to collective bargaining in a number of very important ways is limited. These workers might very well feel that they have their rights provided for when, in fact, in area after vital area they do not have the protection they need. That strikes me as a kind of institutionalizing of hypocrisy of which any Government should be ashamed. I challenge my colleagues across the way to consider this question very seriously. I challenge them to ask themselves whether it is right to demand of employers across the country high standards while in our treatment of those who work for us every day we are prepared to allow all types of abuses to occur.

My friend, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt, during the time allotted for questions and comments reminded the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet), and all Members of the House, that abuse of workers on Parliament Hill has been controversial in the last year or more. He pointed out that there has been a certain putting on to the public record suspicions, rumours and allegations which only floated about in the past. Some of the worst abuses refer to suggestions of sexual harassment and charges of favouritism and of nepotism which have become bywords around the House of Commons.

My friend from Nickel Belt was quite justified in pointing out that, after having governed for the better part of two decades, the Liberals brought in the Canada Labour Code but settled for the Public Service Staff Relations Act for the Public Service. They did not really provide any reform or protection for workers on the Hill.

It is worth taking a look at what some of the results of this failure to legislate have been. I note, among a number of cases, that our employees have put forward such instances as the following. In a technical service a senior position became vacant. Several employees inquired when a competition would be held to fill the position. There was no competition. Then the husband of a manager in another department of the same service was brought in to fill the post—on a temporary basis, of course. Several months later a competition was announced.

The now-experienced husband was hired permanently and the attempt of employees in the service to appeal this particular piece of institutional nepotism was denied.

The next example I have occurred in a support service where several employees held working supervisor positions on an acting basis. They had been in these acting positions for seven, five, three and two years respectively. They were informed that they would be downgraded four levels. Their salaries dropped from \$21,000 per year to \$17,000 per year. During the same period of time new working supervisors were hired without any competition having been carried out. When the former acting supervisors attempted to appeal internally, their appeals were denied. This is an abuse of workers, particularly when one contemplates someone left in a working supervisor position on an acting basis for seven years. Surely, that in itself is outrageous.

The next example I have to put forward occurred in the printing branch. Staff on the Hill are well aware that there is a hiring freeze in effect. In fact, some employees in this branch had been transferred out to other government Departments or offered incentives to take early retirement. However, new casual staff were hired in the printing branch and at least in one case there is a close family link to the senior management of the branch. Again, one sees nepotism as a partial justification for the abuse of experienced employees in the branch.

The next case I have deals with employees in a technical service who were required to attend training courses on their days off, on weekends, without any pay. When they protested this abuse of their free time, they were told that the training courses were mandatory and they had no choice but to take them. That type of arbitrary behaviour from those in supervisory positions strikes me as an outrageous example of what can happen when workers do not have the rights which should apply to them as employees.

I would like to point out one last example of the type of abuses which have occurred. There was in place an employee assistance program which was established for employees of the House of Commons as a type of safety-valve. Given the examples I have just presented, I am sure a safety-valve was more than necessary. This was a means of having personal problems dealt with in confidence by a qualified counsellor. Early in 1985 the counsellor in charge of this employee assistance program was fired, the position was abolished and the program responsibility was turned over to the nurses. An appeal to the Speaker asking that the position be re-established was denied. Petitions signed by no fewer than 1,500 employees were ignored by the Speaker's office and by Parliament Hill administration. I note that there was a total of about 3,600 staff members on the Hill, at least in 1984-85, and 1,500 is not very far from one-half of the total number of employees.

Recognizing the types of abuses which have occurred and those which will occur when managers cannot be brought to book and when workers cannot carry through on appeals, I wish to take a look at some provisions of the Bill which is before us. The amendment to the motion suggests that it be