

*Canada Labour Code Amendment*

settle disputes. We allow the tolerance of both sides to be tested to the breaking point. As a government, we are in a hopeless position because 55 per cent of the country's labour force works for the government in one way or another. We are the worst offenders because of the unfair and discriminatory practices we apply in dealing with the thousands upon thousands of Canadians who work for us in the civil service or in our Crown corporations. Surely, it should be our first responsibility to set an example by which modern labour legislation could be worked out.

Surely, there must be ways by which the government could earn the respect of its employees, so that the threat of strikes and open war is eliminated, at least in essential public services. And it should not be too difficult for us to identify essential public services. Simply, they are the services which the people of Canada have requested their government to operate, because they could not trust private enterprises to supply these services without interruption. We have stepped in and, in some cases, confiscated private business ventures because it was in the interests of our country to ensure control. But then, Mr. Speaker, we have turned control over to someone else, someone who, over the years, has equipped himself with more power to manipulate the welfare of our nation than the private businessman ever dreamed of possessing or ever wanted to possess.

May I use the rail strike of last year as an example. I was one of those members of parliament who were honest with their constituents. I said openly that, in my opinion, strikes in essential public services should be illegal. I said that we could not afford to put in jeopardy the safety, health and comfort of our people, and the very survival of our nation, by indulging in conflicts which are costly not only to government and to unions but also to wives and children, to the sick, the poor and the old—in other words, to all those who are in the least involved.

One of those wives wrote to me recently, and I quote from her letter—incidentally she is from British Columbia, from which I also hail:

How many roles are being reversed in this, our glorious B.C., when the wives and mothers are forced, by the atrocious situations in their husbands' union, to go out to work and bring home the bacon, while husbands babysit and roam the streets? I believe in the right for women to work, if they want to, and when their families are grown. But, when I see strong, healthy men doing nothing to fight for their place in society and letting their union executives rule their lives like kings and the members just following along like little lambs, never complaining, just wondering why they are more and more out of work, it makes me boil.

And, Mr. Speaker, it makes me boil too, but I did not have to be afraid to state my views to my constituents who were on strike against the CNR, because I explained to them how I would protect them from having to take a seat on this vicious merry-go-round and from that competition through which everyone loses. I told them that employment conditions in essential public services, at the beginning, should be tied to factors established by private industries and their unions, but that eventually and more ideally the public service, through meaningful, consultative negotiation with the government, should be setting the standard by which those in the private sector would settle their differences.

[Mr. Oberle.]

But really we have gone too far for all that, Mr. Speaker. The same woman to whom I referred previously also wrote:

Some unions and their executives have eaten away at the very souls of our men and husbands. They have taken away their self-respect and have corrupted them by encouraging situations where men must lie, cheat, or pay to get jobs to feed their families.

By allowing this to continue what kind of example are we showing our young men who are ready to go out into the labour force without skills and ambition and the pride necessary to do an honest day's work?

● (1710)

As a wife of a construction worker for six years now, I have watched the power a man's union has over him. It can be for good or for evil. But in our case it is the latter. The only good that has come out of it, is that it has opened my eyes to the real problem in our society. A society is only as good as the people who make the politicians make it. And a union is only as good as the members who make the labour leaders make it.

We have spent a hundred years correcting the sins of unscrupulous and irresponsible business tycoons who certainly were responsible for acts of slavery and worse. But, we have been so preoccupied doing that, that we have overlooked the power the unions and their leaders have accumulated in the process. Human nature, Mr. Speaker, not only applies to business people, it is something which is applicable to others with too much power as well. Unions are still a very vital part of the business of labour relations but, not in the role they have assumed today. They are controlling the only resource a nation has, its responsibility to its labour force and the productivity of that labour force.

Unions are not weak and helpless any more. They not only have developed political muscle unmatched by any other sector of our society, but they also have accumulated almost unlimited financial wealth through pension funds dues and payoffs. But that is not even the real problem, Mr. Speaker. The most frightening aspect of all is that this wealth and power is, to a great extent, controlled from a foreign land. I am quoting from a Canadian press story, making reference to the annual report of the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act. The article which appeared in the *Albertan* of November 5, 1973, reads:

United States-centred unions in Canada collected nearly twice as much money in 1971 as they spent in this country in certain key financial categories, the latest issue of a controversial annual government report says.

The Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act (CALURA) report for 1971, released Friday, shows that international unions paid out \$25.6 million in salaries, strike, pension and welfare benefits to Canadian residents while collecting \$50.6 million in dues and assessments.

Why, Mr. Speaker, do we not have the guts to speak out and issue warnings to our citizens about that? We have no hesitation about condemning and confiscating business controlled by foreigners in order to protect our sovereignty. Just how much more of a threat to our sovereignty today, Mr. Speaker, is foreign control of our labour force? We have had practical demonstrations of what happens to a country, or I should say our country. When the picket signs go up, there is no mercy. The survival of the business is not debated any more. But remember, Mr. Speaker, my conflict is not with the union, my conflict is with government and business. It is business and government that have established the climate in Canada which allowed