

That is the Liberals' own recommendation to cabinet after receiving that recommendation in the Finkelman report. The Canada Labour Relations Council was formed as a result of that recommendation. It was a tripartite committee composed of labour, government and industry. It began work in July, 1975 and unfortunately ended in March, 1976. I say "unfortunately" because labour decided to quit the council as a result of that same government's position on wage and price controls. No public reports ever issued from this council, but there were several confidential reports to the then minister of labour. I will get back to that in a while. These confidential reports again recommended very strongly the sector bargaining position.

● (1710)

I personally have had an interest in this subject since February 13, 1975, when I asked the then government to introduce legislation dealing with sector bargaining. I have a whole report in front of me with respect to every time I wrote on the subject, but I will not read it into the record since I do not have the time.

The first positive response from a Liberal cabinet minister to this recommendation was on April 16, 1975, when the then minister of labour, the hon. member for Hamilton East, said in response to my question on sector bargaining:

Certainly on the labour side I have been receiving considerable encouragement toward this end.

Then on July 17, 1975, I asked the minister whether he could advise the House if the government intended to look at the possibility of having union groups in a single public service sector bargaining with the government simultaneously in order to avoid the fragmentation of union power and, if so, when this House could expect an announcement. The then minister of labour replied:

There is a good deal of sympathy for this type of approach. There have been discussions toward this end with the chairman of the Canada Labour Relations Board and with the business community and with the labour movement itself. There is a general disposition to achieve this type of objective. I might say that we have achieved something along these lines already.

In response to another question from me the then minister of labour said:

I welcome the hon. member's enthusiasm for this approach.

Then on July 28, 1975, I asked the minister:

The first meetings of the Canada Relations Council are now over . . . Can the minister indicate whether the concept of single sector bargaining was discussed at these meetings? What was the result?

The minister's reply was this:

Yes, this issue was discussed. The council decided that both were desirable objectives. They agreed to form panels of management—labour—and government. They will meet several times again and hopefully will come up with some definite recommendations along these lines.

As I said earlier, because of the wage and price controls introduced by the Liberals, labour decided to quit that council, unfortunately, and therefore it was disbanded.

As if there were not enough studies already, the government then commissioned the Bairstow report in March of 1978. It is

a very excellent report which took a short time to publish, and it was released in December of that same year. It supported this position. I would like to quote briefly from the Bairstow report:

Above all, it is our strong opinion that a wider-based bargaining structure in those industries within our terms of reference would be in the best socioeconomic interests of the Canadian public.

The key words there are "wider-based bargaining."

As a result of this, I asked the then minister of labour, Martin O'Connell, why he had not acted on the many recommendations dealing with sector bargaining, the most recent of which was the Bairstow report. Mr. O'Connell answered in the House on February 14, 1979:

I am waiting to discuss the recommendations of that committee with its members—I am waiting for a response to my invitation.

I have brought to the attention of hon. members what I think have been four or five years of positive comments from ministers, and reports and studies which made the suggestion of bringing in sector bargaining. As I said earlier, during those five years the number of strikes increased year after year. In 1977 there were 176 strikes affecting 54,000 employees. In 1980 there were 229 strikes affecting 230,000 employees. This took place during the years when this government and many reports were recommending sector bargaining. We have finally reached the number one position among countries having the most number of man-days lost as a result of strikes. That is a shame. This government has not been able to reach a decision on this most vital of issues.

As recently as November 12, 1980, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) spoke to the London Chamber of Commerce and said:

There is as I indicated growing concern or a shock, I think, at the capacity of even tiny groups of public servants to cause massive disruptions in our lives. And moreover there is a dismay at what appears to be growing disregard of the law governing the collective bargaining process in the federal public service. These are concerns which have been expressed to me and I must say to you that I share the concerns.

I agree with the President of the Treasury Board. Further on in his speech he gave specific support to sector bargaining. In fact, he went on to say:

The right to strike is not an inalienable right. Surely in the case of essential services, there is a greater public good to be served and the right to strike surely must be reviewed in that context.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, and I suggest to hon. members that Canada's economy has been hurt and damaged so much by strikes and walkouts, particularly within the public service sector, that the time has come to take one of two positions. That is to say, first, we could take away the right to strike within the public service sectors of our economy. I strongly recommend this, following on the words of the President of the Treasury Board in the speech he made to the London Chamber of Commerce. We no longer have a 14-hour working day, child labour or many of the other factors which gave rise to granting the right to strike. I believe some unions are now taking advantage of their powers.

Second, if the government is unwilling to take away the right to strike, which is particularly supported by the majority