

Private Members' Business

workers during a strike would seem to apply to all Crown corporations.

Leaving aside the more contentious question of whether it is appropriate to restrict the ability of the employer to make an effort to maintain operations during a strike, as proposed under the bill, we can see that the interdictions in the bill would apply to all Crown corporations regardless of the extent to which the goods and services provided are essential. There would be no point in applying such measures to Crown corporations which are governed by the Canadian Labour Code and which do not provide essential public services. If the interdictions of the bill were to be applicable in such cases, that would thwart the normal process of collective bargaining. In fact that would thoroughly upset industrial relations and the collectivwe bargaining process.

According to the provisions of the bill, Mr. Speaker, exercising the right to stike implies the agreement of the employer who must accept designated limits covering services to be provided and employees expected to be on duty during a work stoppage. For starters, when employees and employers in an essential industry are completely at odds in collective bargaining, I think it is highly unlikely they will manage to reach an agreement about services to be provided and employees to be designated as performing essential duties. The fact is that in a labour dispute the negotiations would more likely relate to their respective economic strength.

I would venture to say that no employer, public or private, would endorse an arrangement enabling a union to shut down an industry by a strike. In all likelihood the collective bargaining process would be seriously impaired if both parties had to make designations, and their chances of concluding an agreement would be next to nil because they would almost certainly wait until the government or Parliament intervened.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I could be more optimistic in connection with the likely impact of the bill on the prospect for peaceful industrial relations in Crown corporations offering essential goods and services. I cannot, and so I conclude that under this bill collective bargaining would be either upended or less effective than it is now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Chambly.

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and honoured to support my colleague, the hon. member for Richelieu, whose riding borders my own riding of Chambly. It is a rare occasion when a private member's is introduced by a member who knows something about that bill by experience. Bill C-201 is about scabs and its main purpose is to prohibit the hiring of scabs by Crown corporations.

The hon. member who introduced that bill has himself experienced the problem of scabs. He was on the picket line in 1987. He is a lawyer who understood union members' problems very well. He was aware of union problems that existed in Quebec before Bill 45, a provincial anti-scab legislation. He was able to appreciate the impact of Bill 45, which created a much better environment for union members in Quebec.

I have often said here in the House how proud I am of Quebec's labour legislation. I have often mentioned Quebec's consumer legislation, the Petty Claims Court Act, Bill 101 on the French language, and I am also very proud of Bill 45, which is more or less reflected in the Private Members' Bill of the hon. member for Richelieu.

This bill is extremely important. It can improve the circumstances of union members, because when a strike is called and union members are out of work and on the picket line, they will not be inclined to use violence of any kind against those we commonly call scabs or strike breakers, who are hired by an employer to lessen the impact of the strike.

The hon. member for Portage—Interlake said he was against strikes, because they tend to disrupt business across Canada. Mr. Speaker, the whole purpose of a strike is to disrupt business! Its purpose is to disturb the employer, to disturb people, to attract their attention to union members because they have a serious problem which must be dealt with right away.

The situation is different now in Quebec, thanks to legislation similar to the bill proposed by the hon. member for Richelieu. Before Bill 45, strikes in Quebec were very violent. There were some very long strikes.