

*Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act*

moving towards having the first collective bargaining agreement for those particular groups on the Hill.

This process is an ongoing one, and it is always a slow process. It takes several years to go through all the organizational and legal and negotiating procedures to get a first contract. Some first contracts take years and years and years, but they do eventually happen. It is extremely unfortunate that in the midst of these negotiations, which followed the organizational pursuit and the legal challenges that have gone on, the Government should put on the Order Paper before the House of Commons Bill C-45, which is a Bill that has the effect of starting the process all over again. It means that those people who have been trying to organize themselves on the Hill for the last three or four years, with some success—I realize there are many who have been trying to organize themselves for much longer than that—will be stopped dead in their tracks and forced to begin all over again. The rights and procedures they will follow under Bill C-45 are such that they will gain fewer rather than more rights than what they would have under the Canada Labour Code.

It being equality day—and I think every day in Canada should be equality day—we should, as a general principle, treat all of our citizens in the same manner. It should not matter under that edict whether a worker works on Parliament Hill in a restaurant or cafeteria, sweeps the floor, is part of the cleaning staff, or whether he or she works off the Hill, the rules and regulations that apply to their efforts to organize themselves as workers should be the same.

I find it very difficult to understand why, because they work on Parliament Hill, their rights and privileges should be somewhat less than if they worked across the street. I think a lot of Canadians have trouble with that concept, and that is why I think they would have trouble with Bill C-45 if they read it and understood it better. I think the Government has been having some trouble with Bill C-45 as well because it introduced it some time ago, the Bill was debated in this House in December of 1985, and it has just been brought back in again now. I would hope that that is some indication that the Government sees it as being not particularly necessary and it is only bringing it forward to interfere with the bargaining process that is now in place. I would hope that the only reason it was put before the House today was because it did not have any other pressing legislation. I would hope that that was the reason it was brought forward.

I realize that sometimes Governments do get to the point where their agenda is so clear they only bring in legislation that is peripheral to the needs of Canadians. I would assume that today, on a Thursday, is the kind of day that we happen to have hit.

There has been some feeling left in the country, and I think there is a fair bit of feeling which exists on the Government side of the House, that some of these jobs that are performed around Parliament Hill fall into the area of being designated as essential services. I am not sure that that is really a very good argument for offering Bill C-45 to us, because I do not

think that we can look at the operations of the House objectively and say that all of the people who contribute to it are performing an absolutely essential service. It is an important service and the job they do is important. The job that any one of us does as MP is also relatively important, but it is not essential. We have had, since this Parliament began, two resignations from the House. The House functions just as well without those two, albeit both were extremely good and effective Members, but the House is still functioning since they have left. The mother of Parliament, Westminster in London, allows its employees to have bargaining rights, and to organize and have procedures whereby they can appeal the hiring practices and the practices putting people forward in particular branches to permit them to work their way up within the organization, and they function well. The Parliament in Australia has similar legislation and it has no problem with it. I fail to understand how the argument can be made that Canada could not function with this kind of labour legislation.

I was here when the bells rang in this Parliament for 14 or 15 days. It was not a disaster and the country still functioned. All of the Departments of Government still did their job. There was nothing that was held up and the people of Canada barely noticed the difference, unless they happened to come to Parliament Hill and heard the bells clanging through these tall stone corridors and reverberating in their ear drums. It did not precipitate a crisis, and we were out for 15 days.

I fail to see the validity of the argument that is sometimes made, or at least if not made directly often alluded to under cover, that this place provides an essential service and the various groups that have the potential to make up bargaining units on the Hill are performing essential services without which this country cannot operate. I find it even more difficult to understand when I look at some of the groups that are now permitted to have full bargaining rights, including the right to strike, which include the basic transport workers we have in this country who work for Air Canada, CN, CP. They include the people who work at the post office, and occasionally those workers do strike, and yet the country functions. The occasional strike that we have I think is accepted by the general public because they know that there are occasions when workers, in order to make their point about hiring practices or promotion practices are forced at the bargaining table to use the last trump card that they have, namely, the strike. If the strike weapon were available to Parliament Hill employees I think it would be used very seldom.

• (1750)

We just had the opportunity to hear from a former Hill employee recounting some of his experiences and some of the attitudes and opinions of people around the Hill. When you listen to Hill employees, it seems most of the problems and grievances that build up are due to the fact that there is no proper procedure for those employees to deal with their grievances. They have no place to go. That is why we have such instances as the following one. An older worker had hurt her back and was sent home. She was receiving benefits. Her