

mines in Canada. Geologists tell me there are many areas that could be developed with respect to gold mining, and with the proper legislation in force prospecting and exploring could be undertaken at a much faster rate.

Finally, we believe that the name of the act is a misnomer in that it should be more of a stabilization act. With that in mind we have suggested that the name be changed to "Gold Mining Stabilization Act". At the committee stage it was suggested that that amendment would be accepted, but we felt it was better not to change the name without changing the general philosophy and policy of the act at the same time. In short, we believe that the long-range objective of the legislation should be to stabilize the gold mining industry in Canada. If the five points I have outlined were adopted by the government, we believe that the legislation would have a stabilizing effect on the gold mining industry and lead to a growing mining sector in our economy.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

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● (1550)

PUBLIC SERVICE STAFF RELATIONS ACT

AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION OF BOARD TO PROVIDE FOR NOT MORE THAN THREE DEPUTY CHAIRMEN

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council) moved that Bill C-178, to amend the Public Service Staff Relations Act be read the second time and referred to the Committee of the Whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take very much of the time of the House in explaining this bill but I believe it is of some interest to make a number of statements in order to advise members of the House and members of the Public Service of what is intended.

The present bill to amend the Public Service Staff Relations Act has the objective of strengthening the board by allowing for the addition of not more than three deputy chairmen. This is an interim measure which is required in order to strengthen the board and permit it to deal effectively and expeditiously with matters coming before it.

One of the advantages deriving from the passage of this bill will be an easing of the demands on the chairman of the board, Mr. Jacob Finkelman, thus permitting him to undertake a report on further amendments required to the act. Mr. Finkelman, who has been with the board since its inception in 1967, has witnessed the actual day to day operation of the existing legislation. Therefore, if we can provide relieving additional vice-chairmen, we will ask Mr. Finkelman to make a report on further amendments to the public service staff relations board. In exercising his function, Mr. Finkelman has gained the respect of both the employer and employee representatives before the board for his impartiality and good judgment.

The government has decided to take advantage of Mr. Finkelman's expertise in this area by requesting that he prepare a study based on his experience under the present act and make recommendations for change where he feels they are necessary. Although Mr. Finkelman's study is not to be restricted to any particular aspect of the Public

Public Service Staff Relations Act

Service Staff Relations Act, it is envisaged that his internal knowledge of the requirements of the board will be of great assistance in determining what administrative framework is required for the effective administration of the act. In the preparation of his report, it is the government's intention that Mr. Finkelman shall have available to him any relevant internal documents, including the Bryden report, which may be useful to him.

It is hoped, therefore, that the House will see fit to pass this bill as quickly as possible so that Mr. Finkelman will be able to begin his task as soon as possible. If the chairman of the board is successful in recruiting the necessary deputy chairmen required for the board, it is anticipated that his report will be available to the House early in the fall for consideration. It has been the government's posture that no major amendments would be made to the Public Service Staff Relations Act without a full opportunity being given to the employee representatives to openly participate in any proposals which are made. It is anticipated, therefore, that the employee representatives would be invited to comment on Mr. Finkelman's report to the standing committee charged with its consideration, and in addition, of course, there would be full consultation between the government and the employee representatives before the government bill making major amendments to the act is brought forward.

Although this proposed procedure is open to the criticism that it will further delay any proposed amendments to the act, I think it is fair to say that all parties involved in the application of the act will agree that it has worked reasonably well thus far and is considered to be among the most progressive and successful legislation of its type in the world. For this reason, I think it is essential that any further major amendments to the act be fully considered and agreeable to the parties affected by the legislation. Only through the good will, confidence and voluntary agreement by all the parties involved to "make the legislation work" can we expect any amendments to the act to be successful and an improvement.

The proposed bill before the House today would strengthen the public service staff relations board by adding "not more than three" deputy chairmen. These deputy chairmen would be neutral members of the board appointed by the Governor in Council for a term not exceeding ten years. The addition of these deputy chairmen would permit the board to dispose of cases before it more quickly and to deal effectively with the existing backlog. The existing balance at hearings of the board whereby, in addition to an equal number of representatives of both the employee and employer, only one "neutral" member of the board would be permitted to vote will be continued. This is provided for in subclause 5(2). It is anticipated that these additional members of the board would be incorporated in any new administrative framework proposed when the major amendments are made to the act in the future.

This is an amendment which all parties affected by the legislation have requested, and I would hope that it could pass the House today so that it could be dealt with by the Senate and given Royal Assent before the House rises for the Easter adjournment.