

according to the President of the Treasury Board, the motion to provide collective bargaining and negotiation to proceed in some rational manner basically states that the government will determine whether or not it will exempt certain groups of employees from the provisions, of the act.

I do not know how the government can pretend that that type of amending clause will allow workers the right to negotiate. That clause would seem to indicate that the government, in its benign, so-called wisdom, will determine whether or not the workers in certain unions, such as CN, may negotiate with their employers. It will also decide whether or not workers in any of the other Crown corporations may negotiate with their employers. It will decide whether or not government workers can negotiate with the government. To be quite honest, that is not a power which should be entrusted to this government.

The whole purpose of passing legislation in the House of Commons is to ensure that rights are clearly spelled out. I am not talking about rights of government. I am talking about the rights of unions and companies. If the government really wants negotiations to proceed in some normal pattern, and even if it wants to keep the 6 and 5 per cent limitations in place—and we do not like those limits—and allow for collective bargaining on either monetary or non-monetary items, it should say that in this bill.

• (1250)

Do not just give us a namby-pamby amendment which says that the government, if it so chooses, will decide whether you can negotiate. That is not restoring collective bargaining. That does not let unions, individuals and companies retain the rights and obligations they presently have under the Canada labour Code and the Public Service Staff Relations Act.

The great Liberal so-called amendment to restore negotiations and collective bargaining is nothing but a refinement of this public relations job. Every so often the government throws in the towel on one amendment or another, an amendment to this clause or that clause. There is a string attached to that towel, because it comes right back to the government as soon as you look at the details of what the government has done.

There has been great press throughout the country yesterday and today saying, "Good, the government will let people negotiate again; isn't that wonderful?" The government has finally seen the wisdom of members of the New Democratic Party and some members of the Conservative Party, not all of course. We are not sure where the Leader of the Opposition stands; he is on both sides as usual.

There has been great press, great public relations for the government, but then you look at the amendment. When you look at the clause you find there is nothing there. It is strictly up to the government to decide who can negotiate and who cannot. It does not even say on what grounds the government made that decision. I presume that if it is a union which supports the Liberal Party, it will have a better chance of being able to negotiate. If it is a company which supports the Liberal government, I suspect the workers will not get the

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right to negotiate. Fifty thousands dollars a year can buy a lot of support from that party and that government.

Even if I was not cynical, and I must admit that I am, I believe the problem is that the government has no real commitment to negotiate. This government has no real understanding of workers' rights, no real appreciation of the fact that for the vast majority of collective agreements in this country there has been a peaceful resolution through the negotiation process. This government is cynical. The minister responsible for this bill has a history of union-bashing. He has appeared in front of all sorts of groups, basically business groups such as the Conference Board, saying you cannot allow designations, that the government must have more power to designate.

The minister has gone in front of the Conference Board and said that all levels of government—and I quoted him in committee—have been too soft on the unions and it is time we did something about it. He certainly did do something about it. The minister, his fellow ministers in cabinet and Liberal backbenchers had better not pretend that this is a bill to solve the economic problems of Canada, because that is not true. The Leader of the Opposition had better not say that this is a step in the right direction one day and the next day reject controls because he does not think they will work. He and the members of his party had better not pretend that this program is going to solve the economic conditions that Canadians face. The cabinet, the President of the Treasury Board, Liberal backbenchers and the vast majority of the Conservative Party had better not pretend in their speeches or in their votes in this House that they are out to solve the problems of Canada. They are out to assist some members of the Liberal cabinet and some senior officials in the Liberal back rooms. They are out to ensure that the public relations job sells.

I hope that the Conservative critics, and I see all three in the chamber, will speak about the real problems with this bill. I hope that they will convince their leader to speak out of only one side of his mouth for the next few days. If the three members here cannot convince their caucus, I hope that they can convince their members that this bill is a PR job and that the Conservative Party is being sucked into that PR job. It is doing a wonderful job of convincing Canadians that this is a Liberal-Conservative coalition. It is out to bash workers, to break collective agreements that this government has already signed. It wants to outlaw collective bargaining in this country. That is what is happening.

I hope that in the next few days, instead of introducing amendments which are a PR job, that do not give the right to negotiate and do not allow real increases or benefits for pregnant women, this government will reject the PR approach. I hope it will look at the 80 per cent of Canadians who believe that job creation and lower interest rates are the way to solve the problems that Canada faces.

That is what Canadians believe, our leader believes and our caucus believes. Only 6.8 per cent of Canadians believe that the program which the government and the official opposition are supporting will work. They want something to solve the