

manufacturing outlets in this country, has a negative impact.

• (1230)

This bill is indeed complex and I suspect very few people will get into the intricacies of it. It is a complex bill that impacts 150,000-plus individuals who work for the government, but they work for 26 million Canadians and have an impact everywhere in their daily lives.

We had a labour dispute just a while back. The walk-out affected a wide range of government services. It delayed traffic at airports and harbours. It closed waterways and jammed border crossings. Ships carrying Canadian grain bound for China were halted. Convicts at a B.C. prison complained of strike related hardships and rioted. Industrial production staggered as imported manufacturing components were delayed at border customs posts.

It impacted the whole country. I think the government believed that politically it was not a bad idea and that Canadians would turn on their public servants. Well, it backfired. There was a great deal of sympathy for the people who worked for us and that tide of sentiment really turned around.

As Premier Bob Rae suggested, to legislate a zero per cent increase and ask for co-operation really borders on the ridiculous. The treatment of people in that way is no longer acceptable. We are not going to get into the intricacies of the bill, but we went to a special presentation that suggested what we require above all is a 70 per cent attitudinal change, a 20 per cent mechanical change, and a 10 per cent legislative change.

Our suggestion is that we work on the attitudes first. If we need an attitudinal change of 70 per cent, let us work on that. Do not bring in legislation that is extremely unpopular with the workers of the country. It is going to be very difficult for them to co-operate because it will impact them most directly. Let us deal with the attitudes of the government, the employer. Let us work on those attitudes first. Let us win the confidence of the people who work for us.

In PS 2000 there is an indication that consultation was not carried out the way it should have been to come to a consensus that meets at least with the grudging approval of the workers. There are small areas of positives in this

Government Orders

bill, and I will cite the concept of probation to try to give both sides of the picture. You should undergo a probationary period only one time. Previously if you transferred to another position you would have to undergo another probation for that particular occupation. We accept the concept of one probation. If you are good enough to perform government service in one occupation, I suggest you are good enough to serve in another occupation.

It will also facilitate the placement of people in new positions and shorten the time periods so we will not be left without public servants in appropriate positions.

Of course we have some problem with the concept that merit may be set aside, that more subjective decisions may be made by managers, and that the competency of people may not be the final judgment. We are not here to suggest that anyone would make arbitrary patronizing kinds of decisions, but that potential is there. The fear of public servants is that merit will be set aside and these other considerations will take its place.

I would like to mention contracting out. One of the direct implications of this bill is that if work is taken out of one department and put into another department, the manager has the authority to lay off a person within the confines of his work area. We are suggesting with the bent of this government on contracting out that we are convinced there is a \$5 billion scam. It is not saving. It is costing taxpayers money. We should not allow that area to lose its work force. There is no protection whatsoever for the employees.

Another major problem is that we are undertaking to overhaul a system that is indeed antiquated. Rather than tackling the system as a whole, however, we have decided to tinker with it. The tinkering is taking place in a rather simplistic fashion. We will just sort of place these thousands of people into this category. The category will be unwieldy and impossible to deal with.

Rather than overhauling the system, as I think public servants agree should be done, we are going to tinker with the system to the detriment of workers. I think in the end this will be to the detriment of Canadian services. I repeat that I think it is somewhat popular to dump on public servants and to bash them because they are the most visible of all workers. Everybody sees them. They are on the front line serving the people. I think the vast majority of them want to serve and they want to