

Private Members' Business

the work of another employee who participates in a legal work stoppage.

While the existing provisions may not satisfy the hon. member's concerns, they do provide Crown corporations an opportunity to continue functioning during a work stoppage, while at the same time they protect the rights of permanent employees who legally participate in such activities.

I would suggest that what the proposed legislation is doing is putting severe restrictions on the free collective bargaining process. As did its predecessor, the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act, the provisions of the Canada Labour Code passed by Parliament provide an appropriate framework for the functioning of the industrial relations systems within the federal jurisdiction and have served us well over the years.

I believe that the best form of collective bargaining exists when the parties themselves are faced with the task of reaching an acceptable and workable agreement. The more restrictions placed in the process, the less likely the parties will be prepared to make the necessary tradeoffs and compromises provided.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are very proud to see this bill before the House today, and they are also extremely proud of the fact that one of their own members introduced this bill.

Amazingly, it takes something resembling a lottery for the House to consider one of the fundamental problems of any democratic country: the problem of civilized behaviour and discipline in relations between labour and capital.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to introduce certain democratic principles in our labour relations, principles that are known in many countries, and even in our own, in provinces like Quebec, for instance.

I heard previous speakers mention the need to maintain fairness and freedom in labour negotiations. That is what this bill tries to do. It is intended to ensure there is a balance between the various forces involved.

Mr. Speaker, I was there, front row centre, during a debate that almost shook Quebec to its foundations in the 1970s, in 1976-77, when the government at the time introduced anti-scab legislation. I can assure you that

the arguments we heard against that bill were far more forceful and impressive than those we are hearing today. People said we were headed for disaster, Mr. Speaker. They said Quebec would become a war zone if this bill was adopted; that it would cause fundamental injustice; that strikes would last much longer and that there would be no more free negotiations; and that the unions would have an unfair advantage, in a confrontation that is always difficult to control.

• (1330)

After a difficult, long drawn-out debate, the Quebec government managed to get the National Assembly to pass Bill 45 which became our anti-scab legislation. And now, 13 years later, we still have a system that is much stricter and far more controlled than what is being proposed here. And as for the disastrous consequences that were predicted, if we look at the statistics, we see that since the anti-scab bill was passed in Quebec, the average duration of labour disputes has been reduced by 35 per cent. That is something to consider.

The bill before the House today does not ask us to go out on a limb; it is not fraught with unknown perils; and no disaster lurks around the corner once the legislation is passed. On the contrary, just look at the situation in Quebec. Admittedly, Quebec has been a pioneer in Canada in social affairs and civilized employer-employee relations. The House would be ill-advised to ignore the fact that Quebec has taken the lead as a result of the social and economic renewal which swept through the province in the 1970s, particularly by restoring proper employer-employee balance. I fail to see why anyone would seek to maintain the *status quo* in this field.

This insistence on reliving the violent incidents of the 1930s reflects a peculiar attitude. As you may recall, savage freedom prevailed at that time. As one would say in Quebec, might was right. Invariably the strongest was the winner, for he could hire more scabs and attract strikers by dangling before them untold opportunities for stable employment. Do Canadians really want to go through that again?

Let no one tell me this has not happened since then, for we saw that in 1986-87 in the case of the bus company Voyageur, we saw that in the case of the grain elevators, the 1986-87 postal strike and again today in the port of Montreal where, we are told, scabs are now involved in