

Canada Labour Code

Very similar arguments are applicable to workers in industries governed by collective agreement. As anyone well grounded in Conservative principles ought to know, our social obligations are not limited only to the state. The state itself is a composite of corporate groups, each of which acts in its own sphere to regulate and civilize the life of the citizen. Just as the individual is bound to obey the national laws because he is the beneficiary of ordered conditions imposed by the state, so too where a worker is the beneficiary of conditions negotiated by a trade union, even where he is an involuntary beneficiary, by accepting these benefits he contracts certain obligations to that trade union, that is to say, the paying of dues.

As in the case with the laws promulgated by our Governments, the trade union has the option of joining in collective action at the time of union elections to change union officials, if he does not like them or should he believe the policies and actions of the leadership to be inadequate. I, for one, believe that these elections of trade unionists are free and democratic. Either as a citizen or a trade union member, the individual in Canada cannot be compelled to take part actively in political or union activities. That is a matter of law and is one of the basic tenets of democracy. Canadians have the right of non-participation in political and union affairs. We witness the fact that at election time sometimes only 75 per cent to 80 per cent of the people take advantage of the opportunity to vote.

● (1600)

Nor are all workers in all industries even required to take nominal union membership under the current provisions of the Canada Labour Code. For the Hon. Member for Prince George-Peace River to suggest it is a matter of natural right for individual workers to benefit from collective agreements and yet be exempt from contributing to the maintenance of those institutions is as irresponsible, in my view, as it would be for him to say that individuals should benefit from institutions of the state and yet not contract any obligation for their maintenance.

Does the Hon. Member object that these are not the things that he advocates, that all he wants to do is to redress a perceived increase in union strength? I put it to him, and this is my last statement, that the amendment he is advocating, if passed, would destabilize seriously the union system in this country. It would lead to increased union rating of members, would threaten the financing of trade unions and could seriously undermine the ability of union leaders to reach agreements and guarantee their observation, and would surely threaten a degeneration of industrial relations in this country.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Hon. Member for Welland (Mr. Parent) would permit me to ask a brief question before you recognize the next speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): That could only be done with unanimous consent of the House. Is there consent to allow the Hon. Member for Prince George-Peace River to put a question?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): There is not unanimous consent.

* * *

THE ROYAL ASSENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Government House,
Ottawa,

April 27, 1983

Madam,

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Brian Dickson, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 27th day of April, 1983, at 5.45 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain Bills.

I have the honour to be
Madam,

Your obedient servant,
Esmond Butler
Secretary to the Governor General

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE**AMENDMENT RESPECTING UNION MEMBERSHIP**

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Oberle that Bill C-267, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to respond to this Bill. I want to use that opportunity because, as a new Member of this House, I have not had occasion previously to engage in the ritual of answering the Hon. Member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle) on the Bill which he apparently brings forward every couple of years. In fact, this is my first opportunity even to hear his argument. I do wish to answer.

The Hon. Member's Bill would clearly have the effect of undermining or destroying bargaining units that have been agreed upon between a union and an employer by permitting an individual to claim the benefits of membership while refusing the obligation.

The Hon. Member claims we should copy certain other countries. He disregards the fact that these laws were built up over many years, at least half a century in Canada. In fact, they were built up under Governments, Liberal, Conservative or Progressive Conservative, federal and provincial.

It is rather amusing to hear the Hon. Member describe the effect of these laws, by implication, as socialist. That means that Liberal federal Governments and Conservative provincial