

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

conveying the concerns of their constituents who happen to be public servants. I do not want to suggest that a Member representing a strongly public servant riding should think only of their side. There no doubt are issues on which one has to decide whether to support something the public servants want or look at the other side and the way the country in general feels about it. However, that has nothing to do with the responsibility to be aware of what is happening and be prepared to come forward and express your constituent's point of view.

Each of us is called on to represent a diverse riding. As issues arise which affect one group more particularly than others, that group is definitely entitled to look to their Member of Parliament. Therefore, I am not going to comment on their absence from the House. It is Friday afternoon and that is not something to be commented on. However, it is important to note that they have done nothing at all to give us that extra time. The amendment calls for a month, but it could be just as easily six weeks. Whatever it is, some period of time is needed in which to get the reasons for judgment, review them, decide whether there is going to be an appeal, and permit the groups concerned to reformulate the briefs they have submitted to us in light of this important decision yesterday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I support the amendment calling for a 30-day hoist of Bill C-45. This Bill is an attempt to place the employees on Parliament Hill under the aegis of collective bargaining. The workers on Parliament Hill serve Members of Parliament. They work in the restaurants and cafeterias. They bring us back and forth in those little green buses. They answer to our beck and call and take messages between offices. We send them to get our laundry, take our suits to be pressed and our shoes to be shined. I want to tell you that the Members of Parliament are a pampered lot. They are served and ministered to around here in a sort of master/slave relationship.

Mr. Kempling: Oh, that's sick.

Mr. Rodriguez: We have touched a very sensitive nerve over on the Government side. I would hope they would be so touched that they would get up and participate in this debate, because I want to hear the Government rationale for this garbage called Bill C-45. It is supposed to protect workers and allow them to bargain collectively on the Hill.

One of the things we hear a lot about in Parliament is its historical privilege. You cannot do anything to infringe on the privileges of a Member of Parliament. Creeping into Bill C-45 is the suggestion that somehow or other the privileges of Parliament must be continued. We must not allow the workers on the Hill to not take our shoes to be shined. We must have the bus go directly from the Confederation Building to the Centre Block without stopping at the West Block if there is an underling on the bus. Do you know that if a Member of Parliament is on the bus coming from the Confederation

Building to the Centre Block and there is a lowly messenger on the bus who has to get off at the West Block, that driver is going to bring the Hon. Member of Parliament all the way to Centre Block without stopping at the West Block. That is because he says the Members have privilege! Privilege! The Government wants to ensconce in Bill C-45 a master/slave relationship.

Do the workers on Parliament Hill deserve collective bargaining rights? The answer is an unequivocal yes, they deserve it. They do not deserve it in half measures. They do not deserve it with this built-in protection for what is called, in parliamentary language, privilege. One of the things the Government is concerned about is that these people will go on strike. I know a lot of the Conservatives come from the ivory towers of the corporate world and they have a certain bias against collective bargaining in the first place. They say we cannot have these workers going on strike. If they go on strike, somehow or other that interferes with the so-called sacred privilege which Members of Parliament enjoy when they do the work of the nation. Some out there might argue that if a Parliament did not sit and closed down for a couple of weeks maybe the taxpayers would save a pile of money!

• (1440)

It is funny that this whole question of privilege that Members of Parliament are supposed to have comes from the mother of Parliaments at Westminster. We always go back, as some sort of touchstone, and say, "This is the way it was at Westminster, the mother of Parliaments. That is where our system comes from." At Westminster the employees in the Parliament are unionized; they have full collective bargaining rights with the right to strike. What has the Government done here?

You think I was kidding when I talked about the master-slave relationship. Well, there are such relationships. Mr. Lloyd Francis pointed out in his interviews, which are on tape in the Library of Parliament, some of the things that took place on the Hill. He was the Speaker of this Chamber and he pointed out that there was sexual harassment. Unless a woman was prepared to take her clothes off she could not get a job or she could not get a promotion. He pointed out clearly that nepotism was rampant on the Hill. This place has been like an enclave disconnected from the realities of what is happening in the private sector and the public sector off the Hill. Are the workers on this Hill not entitled to the same sort of collective rights as the workers at Inco or Ford Motor Company, or workers anywhere else in this country? Are they not entitled to bargain collectively to protect their rights on the job? The answer is yes.

We know, for example, there is an abuse on the Hill because there is no protection of a collective agreement. I had workers from the restaurant in the Cafeteria of the Parliament coming to me last summer because they were working overtime and they were not getting paid for the overtime they worked in the subsequent pay, but were getting it six months later. If they