

*Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act*

My colleague from Hamilton-East (Ms. Copps) has proposed that the Bill be read in a month's time and not be adopted today. I think we should ask ourselves why the motion was presented by my hon. colleague. Bill C-45 was an interesting concept, in that it proposed to deal with a fundamental problem, that of unilateral negotiations between an employer and his employees, and subsequently provide for a lateral system with a collective bargaining process as defined in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I am rather surprised to see the Government is not proceeding with greater celerity in this respect, because the Bill was tabled last April, we had the Bill in the House for second reading last November, and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Hnatyshyn) said that it was one of their priorities. Since then, not a word about the Bill until the middle of April. This reminds me of the Secretary of State (Mr. Bouchard) and what he told me in the House today in referring to language programs: We must not go too fast. The Government's policy is rather problematic, and to quote the Secretary of State, this is a matter—he was talking about official languages, but we could say the same thing about unionizing—that cannot be settled quickly. We cannot proceed at a brisk pace because the question is too contentious, too important and in the final instance too perilous. Those were the words used by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House asks the Government to delay the passage of Bill C-45 for a month because the situation has changed.

[English]

Bill C-45 which provides employees of the House of Commons and the Senate with a framework of representation is a Bill which must be looked at in a new light and perspective. In its present form, the legislation has been rejected by the Public Service Alliance of Canada, as well by the National Association of Broadcasting Employees and Technicians. Their concern centres on the fact that the Bill enshrines in law an employer-employee relationship which does not meet with the employees' approval. With the new developments, which I will explain later, Bill C-45 must be the object of further consideration by the Government before it will be acceptable to its own employees.

• (1530)

I for one would go along with the process of further consultation. I would like to see the Government sit down with its employees in order to figure out a plan of action which would be acceptable to the Government and to the employees of Parliament. When I say "of Parliament" I mean the Senate, the House of Commons, and the Library of Parliament. I consider the workers on the Hill essential. Whether my friend, the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy), does or does not, I do. I know for a fact that if the bus drivers, the security people, or for that matter any employee of the House of Commons goes on strike, my friend from Ottawa Centre

will be the last one to cross a picket line. I know him to be very respectful of picket lines. We have to make up our minds in respect of this matter. We cannot have it both ways. One has to stand up and say: "Yes, we believe their services are essential because they serve Parliament and Parliament is a servant of the Canadian public". It is an essential service and it should be defined as such.

I have been waiting for the Clerk to bring me a definition of the word "essential" as defined in the Public Service Staff Relations Act. I would like to use that definition in my participation here, and I do not have it with me. I see that a gentleman is bringing the book to me.

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** An essential service.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Yes, it is. Here is an example *in vivo*, as we say. It is an essential service to the Members of this House. Here is a gentleman who went, with the help of one of the Clerks, to obtain a book for me. In this book we will find the definition of "essential services".

The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) has stated to employee representatives that the Government is willing to give parliamentary employees the same rights as those enjoyed by public servants. However, the legislation presented in the House does not live up to that billing. It does not live up to my expectations of what should be forthcoming from the Treasury Board as the employer of public servants.

I say that it does not live up to my expectations because I went through this process before in 1976-77. At that time the House of Commons, in concert with the other place, formed a joint committee to look at possible amendments to the Public Service Staff Relations Act. We did this because there are in the Act matters which I find to be in great need of change. In my view, they should be modernized, if not updated, to take the wellbeing of our public servants into consideration, as well as to try to modernize the whole process of negotiation. There are matters such as classification standards to be considered. During the election campaign the governing Party promised that it would make classification standards negotiable. That Party has been in office for two years now and it has not even put forward a suggestion on the subject. I admit it is a complex issue. I also admit that it is a very technical one since classification standards determine where one sits in the organization, what kind of job one has waiting for one.

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** Rug-ranking.

**Mr. Gauthier:** I believe that is an image which one can use to decide where one sits *dans l'organigramme de l'organisation*.

I find it interesting that a challenge such as amending the Public Service Staff Relations Act has not been forthcoming and that the Government still hesitates. It hesitates on this matter as it does on many other matters. It hesitates to come forward with some reasonable and meaningful modifications to