

I am also proud to stand in this corner of the House and be able to look at my Prime Minister because I know, with a sense of conviction, that one thing which motivates him is his concern for the working man. His entire career is an example of that.

I was also proud this summer to be part of a political Party which had in its political platform a genuine commitment the extension of the political rights of public servants. That will be done by this Government during this term of office. I thank the Prime Minister for that political platform. It was a pleasure to run on it, and it will be a pleasure to see that happen.

Also, as I stand here today, I am puzzled because one fundamental thing that makes the country one of the best in the world, if not the best, is the fact that we have workers' rights, a history and tradition which is free and democratic and which includes the right to collective bargaining. The collective bargaining process is essentially one which involves the views of management and labour. They come together to argue so that an agreement can be reached which is acceptable to both parties. When it comes to the issue of political rights for public servants, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, that process is taking place. We have a process in place where representatives of public servants through their union are at the bargaining table with the Government in an atmosphere where issues can be resolved.

I was surprised the New Democratic Party came forward today and tried to indicate to the House that the judgment of Members of the House of Commons should supersede the collective bargaining process. It really invited us, by asking for the subject matter of this Bill to be passed on to committee today, to abrogate the rights of workers to participate in the collective bargaining process. It was much like asking us to legislate workers back to work. I find that very surprising, I really do.

We on this side of the House have a sincere and genuine conviction about the rights of workers. If a matter turns out to be unresolvable in the collective bargaining process and there is need for action on the part of the Parliament of Canada, it would be appropriate for the Government to bring forward a reference establishing a committee to look at that issue and that issue alone.

There are many new Members in the House of Commons, but I urge all Hon. Members to consider whether or not it is appropriate to pass this kind of subject matter on to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates. Essentially that committee is comprised of a group carefully selected by the nominating committee to look at budgetary matters such as budgetary consequences. Is it really the most appropriate group to look at issues relating to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and at political issues in terms of the image of the Public Service of Canada?

Mr. Benjamin: Read the Bill.

Public Service

Mr. Hawkes: I hear the Hon. Member for Regina West. I have read it. What the Bill fails to do speaks eloquently about what was on the Hon. Member's mind. In his Bill he says that we should open up the rights all the time to virtually everyone in every circumstance.

Mr. Benjamin: No, it doesn't say that.

Mr. Hawkes: It really does. It does not deal with this issue as the British Parliament has dealt with it. The British Parliament has dealt with it in a manner satisfactory to those who work in its Public Service by establishing categories of public servants. Some categories, such as people who have jobs as file clerks and so on, have all the political rights and freedoms which the rest of us enjoy. However, people in very sensitive positions are classified somewhat differently because of the belief that if they were to exercise those rights, the rights of others would be affected. I bring to the attention of the Hon. Member the fact that there are three—

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In view of the importance of this debate, I would not like the Hon. member to overlook the reference to Section 32(6) in the Hon. Member's Bill, which in fact excludes deputy heads from the activities described and therefore makes the exceptions he is seeking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) knows very well that that is not a point of order but is, rather, a question of debate.

Mr. Hawkes: It excludes 70 people out of a quarter of a million. If that is not virtually everyone, I do not know what is.

I bring to the attention of that Hon. Member and others that many public servants are, on behalf of all of us, in positions which require very sensitive decision-making. Let me use as an example a position which may appear simple on the surface, such as that of an immigration officer who basically has to make a decision whether or not someone is an acceptable or desirable immigrant to Canada. If he or she were to be viewed by applicants as favouring people of a particular political persuasion, would that be in the best interests of the applicants or of the country? What about those who make regulatory decisions?

Mr. Cassidy: What about them? Your Party favours the principle of the Bill. It said so in the campaign.

Mr. Hawkes: This Party favours the principle of the Bill that political freedoms and rights for Canadian public servants be extended as broadly and as securely as possible forever, so that a wrong which has existed for over a hundred years can be corrected. However, today, in February of 1985, this Party says to the House that representatives of public servants are at the bargaining table with the Treasury Board. The best and most knowledgeable representatives in terms of the sensitivities of their jobs are public servants. On this day this House should