

Government Orders

watching a house burn, perhaps with a small child inside, because the firemen were out on strike.

For 22 years I was an air traffic controller. During that time there were two strikes, both of very short duration. In both cases the controllers were legislated back to work. In both cases when the controllers were on strike they did not picket because they recognized that a relative handful of people had too catastrophic an effect on the entire air transportation industry and it would be unfair and unrealistic to put up a picket line.

It ended up that air traffic controllers to this day retain the right to strike but each and every controller is designated in the event of a strike to provide minimum safety services. It has been decreed and declared in court that those minimum services are everything they do. The reality is that they can go on strike but they still report to work, the only difference being that their contract is null and void. They are in great jeopardy of having something legislated that bears no resemblance to their old contract.

We penalize certain groups of people in society because they are important. We have to come up with some kind of alternative so that we can fairly deal with people who are important. If we can come up with something that is fair and equitable, why should we not look at broadening the type of system it replaces?

Long ago in the history of mankind people lived in caves. They had no fire for a long period of time. They got their food by going out with clubs and hunting down wild animals. We have progressed from that. We progressed into the Middle Ages when there was slavery and continuous ongoing wars. We evolved further and developed North America. Still there were very tough times. There were winters when many people starved to death. There were diseases for which there was no treatment. There was a lack of help for people in any situation. The changes that have taken place are evolutionary. This is the way we progressed and evolved into the society we have now.

• (1345)

Unions started in the 19th century because companies were oppressive. The managers and owners of certain big industries were absolutely brutal in their unfair treatment of workers. That was the origin of unions. Then we got into the process we have today, this concept of negotiation and strike when agreements could not be reached.

That started in the 19th century. As we approach the 21st century it is not realistic to think there should be some evolution in the process of trade unionism and in labour/management negotiations? It is time for evolution to take place in that area as well.

Most collective bargaining ends up in a settlement. I have talked to many unions and they believe this happens because they always have a hammer, the option of a strike. We must reinvent the hammer. The new hammer, unless someone has a better idea, which I have not heard anyone bring forward, is final offer settlement arbitration; the very hammer the government used for the legislation to settle the Vancouver port strike in 1994.

When given the proper time to be dealt with, this tends to settle most if not all of the differences between the two parties. It then brings the parties as close as possible on all the remaining issues so that each party can get into the most reasonable position so that position will be selected during the final arbitration.

The government needs to carefully design legislation to deal with a new form of labour settlement. The loss we have experienced in this strike goes beyond the transportation industry and beyond the strike itself. There are many types of transportation that will be set up now that will shortcut our ports. They will get goods as quickly as possible across the border into the United States and be sent from there. There are also many ships that have now found that instead of dealing on the east coast of Canada they can deal more reliably on the east coast of the United States.

Rail unions and their companies, other companies, workers, farmers and Canadians have paid a very heavy price for this strike. Let it not be in vain.

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to continue the debate on Bill C-77, the Maintenance of Railway Operations Act, 1995, in order to ensure the country is not deprived of vital rail services essential to the economic well-being of Canadians.

My riding of Windsor—St. Clair is the beginning of the Quebec—Windsor corridor, or the end depending which way you look at it. In Windsor we think it is the beginning.

Thursday night and Friday morning I was in Windsor. I went to the VIA rail station, to the CN yards and to the CP yards. I spoke to the people on the line. I spoke to the people who have been telephoning my office and who have been asking to return to work.

The Ford plant in Windsor was slowed down. The Ford plant in Talbotville just east of my riding was closed, all because of the rail strike. People in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada are out of work. People in Quebec are out of work. These people are out of work and the Leader of the Opposition stood here today and told us that suddenly he is filled with the milk of human kindness for collective bargaining.

Where was he on December 15, 1989? Where was he when the cabinet and Parliament enacted the Government Services Re-