

Canada Labour Code

nationwide centralized bargaining, has suffered a breakdown as colossal as were the early successes. Japan has fewer strikes, it is true, but wage increases have been much greater, especially in the current period.

As far as the theorists are concerned, I remind hon. members that a task force on industrial relations was commissioned by the government as long ago as 1966 in the hope that some better structure could be found. It returned with a thoughtful package containing no great innovations. The bill before us really is a response to the many legislative proposals contained in that report.

I would suggest that the solution to industrial relations problems does not lie ultimately in structural changes such as making strikes illegal or calling for voluntary or compulsory arbitration. As I ventured to say at the outset, the attitude toward industrial relations which most of us hold is too simplistic; we are inclined to think in terms of good guys and bad guys, moral activities and immoral activities, patriotism and selfishness. To me the situation, like most other situations in Canadian society, is more complex. For example, student unrest in universities is not dealt with by passing laws and creating new structures, by putting people in jail or kicking them out of school. Similarly, drug problems are not settled merely by introducing legal reforms, banning drugs and catching the pushers or legalizing drugs and setting up a government selling agency. Fundamentally, we are dealing with a behavioural question and not, at least in the first instance, with a structural one.

We find in Canada today a massive alienation from traditional institutions and values, a wave of protest challenging institutions to justify themselves to the rebels, usually the young. What other interpretation can one place upon the growing and dangerous unwillingness of the rank and file of the unions to ratify the reasonable settlements obtained by their leaders? Clearly the institution of the union, like other institutions in our society, is increasingly losing touch with the rank and file of its membership, and is less relevant to them. So, for that matter, are the corporations. Does the working man believe that the company or the union has his best interests at heart, or does he regard the union as being just another business pursuing its own goals? Does his small, single voice really mean anything in the vastness of the typical industrial situation? Does his voice mean more when he says no than when he says yes?

Parliament faces this same problem vis-à-vis the voters of Canada. As an institution in an age of alienation from established institutions we have to justify ourselves to our constituents by showing an evident concern with the anxieties which are felt by them. Anyone who believes that participatory democracy is fully meaningful to our constituents or even, for that matter, to all members of parliament, does not really understand the developing alienation which was so well described in the Speech from the Throne.

We have before us a bill with many parts. It is not the ultimate solution but it does provide certain structural changes which could, if accepted by the parties affected, relieve some of the concerns which lead to breakdown of the process. Job insecurity caused by the continuing technological revolution is clearly an important ingredient in

[Mr. Kaplan.]

industrial disputes. To this extent, the bill is a positive step and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, exactly one hundred years have gone by since parliament passed the Trade Unions Act which established some orderly industrial relations machinery for Canadian trade unions. Shortly after that, representatives of trade unions came into my area, in the early days of the silver boom, and fought for many things besides wages and improved working conditions. It surprised me today to listen to two hon. members whom I consider to be reactionary enough to have belonged to that age of the 1800s rather than to the 1900s or, more particularly, to 1972. One of them was the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) with his talk about the right to work.

An hon. Member: Oh, come on!

Mr. Peters: To me, the right to work is the right to scab, the right to starve, the right of management to rule.

Mr. Thompson: On a point of order, I should like to ask the hon. member where he got that out of my remarks. To say that kind of thing is unfair and it is not correct.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I have listened over the years to management, chambers of commerce and other organizations violently opposed to unions, who talked about the right to work. To me, the right to work means the right to scab, the right of management to rule. It relates to an act which is still on the statute books of Canada, an act governing the relations between master and servant.

The hon. member for Red Deer quoted a figure which I thought was very interesting. He told us that 700,000 man-days had been lost through strikes. Mr. Speaker, I did a rapid calculation and I find that this year we have lost about 150 million man-days through unemployment. If the hon. member had talked about unemployment being a waste of manpower, if he had talked about the right to work in terms of unemployment, he would have been on better ground. What about the right to work of those half million persons who have been excluded from the active labour force, not because they want to be but because there is no work for them? The right to work—

• (2120)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. Is the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) rising on a point of order?

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I should like to remind the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) that the figure I used, to which he refers, was for 1950. As far as this year is concerned, I was talking of more than seven million.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. The hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters).

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to accept the correction of the hon. member and apologize for misinterpreting him. He has now indicated that the figure is seven million man-days lost through strikes in Canada. But there have still been 150 million man-days lost through