

*Postal Service*

an election may bring than for the good of people. Bill C-45 is a good example that government jugglers do not always come up with the best suggestions. Having made concessions without sufficiently taking into account the adverse effects they might have, the government now feels compelled to enact legislation to take away from a certain group of workers the right to strike they had granted them.

According to the definition in the dictionary, that process could be termed as absurdity, for it is really absurd to legislate to give a group of workers the right to strike and, after a while, pass a legislation to take it away; that has happened before at the time of the railway strike and, unfortunately, we are now again discussing a legislation with the same object.

I understand, and I had the opportunity to read the recent announcement by the Postmaster General (Mr. Lamontagne) who said today that he supported fully the preliminary statement made by the employer before the conciliation board concerning the controversial points. Of course, it is another passage of this announcement. The statement made today repeats the employer's point of view on the events and the facts which prevented both parties from coming to an agreement and the salary increase sought represents a considerable amount of money. This is also one of the reasons why the government introduces this bill but particularly, and I repeat, it is the fear to have a strike during the election campaign which would make it more difficult for those hon. members to communicate with the electorate. I recognize frankly that this reason is questionable. The essential would rather be—and here we act urgently—to introduce a labour legislation which would meet the needs.

Hon. members know just like me that there were written documents published in various places, big books dealing with these questions, but among other things I have here a fairly simple article which is full of good sense. It reads, and I quote:

This is surely no longer a time for this kind of pressure on employers. If every person, rich or poor, would care, we would surely find a solution. We should put human value on top of everything. Sooner or later, we shall have to do so. Why not start immediately?

As a matter of fact, in the past we have always followed the United States. This time it would be a good thing to find ourselves a substitute for strikes. Personally I think that if a jury can judge whether an individual is guilty or innocent, they could also decide on a collective agreement. Surely there are other people who have better ideas than these awful work stoppages.

● (2022)

I remember having made that suggestion to the House and besides our party has looked into a number of questions related to strikes. I had the opportunity to do union work during ten years, at a time when we were lucky enough to negotiate collective agreements with many employers, while always preventing a strike, because everybody knows that a strike is not a solution but a necessary evil which must be avoided as much as possible. It is a pity to see that there are still people with enough imagination to think that the solution to the various labour-management problems is a work stoppage. It is pure

[Mr. Dionne (Kamouraska).]

nonsense. We should logically recognize that all human achievements result from work. It takes only a few minutes of reflection to realize that we are going round in a vicious circle, without any practical solution.

The only concession possible to justify a strike is to view it as an attempt to catch up on the ever rising cost of living under the present system. The right to strike is not fundamental either. It is a phenomenon related to various states of generalized unrest. We must look for the cause of all such situations which have become generalized, but first of all, we must try to find the cause which becomes an eventual means of pressure, because the strike proposal is subject to a vote and the decision is often taken by a small percentage of the workers concerned.

Generally, strikes are aimed against those who pay instead of being aimed at those who deprive the workers. I have said before and I say again that a strike should be directed mainly against the infamous system under which everybody suffers. That is where the strike should be directed, and after changing our corrupt financial system, it would then be much easier to negotiate collective agreements and to get management and labour to agree.

It often happens that any misuse of the means resorted to prevents one from achieving one's aim. We have often noted that some agreements turn into disagreements. A certain percentage of negotiators persist in reinstating their right to have rights, with the result that there are many protests, often based on misunderstanding which more often than not leads to confusion.

Most people demand what they believe to be their rights, without much regard for duties, when a solution must be found to complex problems. I can understand that the situation can become complex. The longer the strike and the negotiations, the more different judicial levels are called upon to solve the conflict, the more the people get exasperated and willing to accept any suggestion. We must never forget, for example, that the right to live far outweighs the right to strike or to lock out.

In this stressful and conflict-ridden climate, whether in industry or elsewhere, and with a legislation inspired by fear in front of the dominating world of finance, it is difficult to find an equitable solution to the labour and management problems of the day. Governments will have to become conscious of their responsibilities with the group of experts they have available to them, and apply a true piece of legislation which does not reflect the control of profiteers on the one hand nor the fear of the behaviour of certain unions on the other, but an understanding, honest, human, just and truly social legislation which provides for an equitable distribution of profits and the guarantee of reasonable wages to workers. It should be possible to draft acts in a clear and concise manner that can be understood by those concerned. It is worth trying because peaceful relations between management and labour are at stake.