

Labour Conditions

the CLC as the representatives of labour in this country to make some concrete suggestions in respect of improvements.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: Are you blaming them for your bad law?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Wait a minute. This is an over simplified approach by the leader of the NDP who is saying that if we invite people to make amendments or suggest improvements to our legislation, somehow we are acknowledging that we are authors of bad law, yet I suppose if we never asked for any suggestion of improvement you would call us arrogant. You cannot have it both ways.

The fact of the matter is, this was very serious legislation in an attempt to cope with inflation. We put out an invitation that was sincerely advanced in respect of suggestions for needed improvements, and they were not forthcoming. However, that is water over the dam. That opportunity has been passed over by the Canadian Labour Congress in terms of a constructive contribution. This, conceivably, could have been one of the areas in respect of which the legitimate voice of labour in this country could have been heard, as well as in respect of other aspects of the legislation. I would think there is still an opportunity.

I make this appeal in the House tonight. There is still an opportunity, despite the position of the Canadian Labour Congress—and we have all heard that amply stated on several occasions—for the CLC to come forward and make representations to this government. I believe it is constructive on the part of the government to keep the channels of communication open with the labour movement in this country, and I invite them to make representations in respect of where needed improvements should be made. The government is willing to listen, and where they have constructive suggestions we are prepared seriously to entertain them. That invitation is renewed to the labour movement.

Mr. Broadbent: I made that suggestion three weeks ago.

An hon. Member: What happened to collective bargaining?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): You talk about collective bargaining. It has always been the policy of this government to maintain the institution of free collective bargaining, resisting all demands of some of the extremists who oversimplify in this House with regard to abolishing the right to strike. This is well known to members of the labour movement who watch the proceedings of this House, and it is certainly well known to hon. members of the NDP. This has been the position of the government. At the same time, we felt that in order to cope successfully with the inflationary situation we should implement a system of selective controls for a temporary period of time. Of course, that is an interference, for a temporary period, with the free collective bargaining system.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): That is the first admission you have ever made. Your ministers have denied it and your Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has denied it.

[Mr. Munro (Hamilton East).]

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Nonsense; and that acknowledgement of abysmal ignorance on the hon. member's part is really appalling.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): It has been acknowledged by many government spokesmen that a selective control system is a temporary interference with, but not a denial of, free collective bargaining.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): It is the obliteration of it.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Nonsense; it is not an obliteration. There are all sorts of collective agreements being reached. The hon. member can go into my department and examine the records of them. There are negotiations going on all the time, right across this country. The hon. member can talk to the mediators and conciliators of all the provincial departments of labour and find out about the settlements being arrived at within the guidelines through free collective bargaining every day.

An hon. Member: We don't have to talk to them. We negotiate with you.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Even if it were not for the guidelines there would be situations in this country where even the unions would agree that, because of profitability or productivity, a 12 per cent settlement would not be warranted or possible, and perhaps a 10 per cent, an 8 per cent or even a 7 per cent settlement would be appropriate. At any rate, what I am saying is that it is perfectly obvious that there are all sorts of situations in this country where, because of certain conditions, settlements even at the ceiling of the guidelines are not feasible or possible. Bona fide unions which are totally committed to get the best they can for their memberships must be prepared to recognize the situation and settle for less. Hon. members say it is a complete denial of collective bargaining, but it is not.

An hon. Member: It is.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): It is not a complete denial of collective bargaining in terms of intellectual honesty.

An hon. Member: Oh, come off it.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): It is certainly an interference with the collective bargaining system; there is no question about that.

An hon. Member: It is destruction.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): It would not make any sense, in terms of a control program, if it were not an interference for this temporary period of time. Obviously, the government did not lightly implement a system that interfered for a temporary period with the collective bargaining system.

An hon. Member: Oh, no!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: The heavy hand, again.