

Fewer union rights: go back to my first scenario, which was the more you suck up, the better the chances of keeping your job.

Lastly, the meetings with a conciliator were fruitless. Just to make the discussion even more interesting, I would like to add that the famous name that I mentioned earlier, the current manager of the Ogilvie mill, is none other than Robert Grynspan, the one who gave the order to shoot in the 1977 conflict in which eight strikers were wounded in Montreal. In 1977, in a democratic country which was not in a state of war, one man gave the order to shoot. Today, that same man is the manager of one of Ogilvie's factories in Montreal. He is free to walk the streets, like you and me.

Because they work in an industry which is covered by the Canada Labour Code, the unionized workers of the mill have been made to pay for the failure to prohibit the use of strikebreakers during a labour conflict under that same code. The mill's employees have often demanded that an anti-strikebreaker law be brought in for companies falling under the federal government's jurisdiction. Despite the promise he made in October 1994, the Minister of Human Resources Development put off tabling such a law in the House of Commons, as you will recall, until spring 1995. Also, the Minister of Labour, when she first took office, stated she would make it a priority.

• (1755)

This must have been left out of the red book. In other words, it is high time the government took steps to stop the kind of labour dispute where workers on the picket lines watch strikebreakers get their wages because the federal government is doing nothing to stop this blatant injustice.

Everyone has a right to be respected, and this applies to workers as well. They are entitled to a decent standard of living and to be respected as individuals who have certain rights. When an employer uses pressure tactics like hiring scabs during a legal strike, this puts an undue stress on the employees, increases the likelihood of violence and undermines the bargaining process.

The use of scabs merely leads to dictatorial and disloyal practices, collective bargaining unworthy of the name and poor labour relations that will have the effect of reducing the quality of service, while probably also adding to the ranks of the unemployed.

The use of scabs during a labour dispute automatically gives the employer an advantage. No wonder that employers who resort to this practice are in no hurry to sit down and bargain in good faith.

The case for introducing anti-scab provisions very similar to those in the Quebec Labour Code is quite straightforward. In Quebec, these provisions, introduced in 1978, have stood the test of time. After 17 years, they still hold true. Legislation in Ontario and British Columbia is in fact based on the provisions in effect in Quebec.

Private Members' Business

The purpose of this bill is to introduce a number of democratic principles that are now accepted in many countries, including ours, principles that we apply every day and which have repeatedly proved beneficial to the settlement of labour disputes.

The statistics show that since anti-scab legislation was passed in Quebec, the duration of labour disputes has decreased by 35 per cent, on average. That is something to consider.

The Canada Labour Code is certainly not perfectly equipped to settle disputes under its jurisdiction. One only has to remember the 1986-87 Voyageur bus strike; the postal strike a few years ago; the strike at the Port of Montreal, which is still fresh in our minds; the three month strike at QNS&L in Sept-Îles last year; and, must I remind you, the infamous strike that has been going on for a year at Ogilvie Mills in Montreal.

Today, we are at the second reading stage. The members participating in the debate, who will have to vote later, must tell us whether or not they agree in principle with making social relations, labour relations in Canada more civilized. Then, if they want to make amendments, they can appear before the legislative committee and suggest all kinds of amendments they deem relevant or necessary. But, for the time being, we must look at the principle—repeat, principle—of the bill.

We must wonder if Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia were justified in introducing a civilized labour relations system, which restored the real balance of power in negotiations resulting from labour disputes.

A strike broken by scabs is no strike but a right to strike hypocritically denied. Either we are for the right to strike, a basic right won by workers after many years of fighting, or we are against. If we are in favour, we will not undermine, either directly or indirectly, the workers' sacred right to strike, with which Canadian employers have learned to live.

Employers learned a long time ago about strikes, lockouts and the bargaining process. In Quebec, we have lived for 17 years with anti-scab provisions, and I submit to you that it would be a shame if this House refused to move with the times and bring its labour legislation into the 20th century, on the eve of the third millennium.

The Canada Labour Code must be updated and improved to meet today's needs and realities.

• (1800)

And the reality today is that there still are honest workers out there who, after having worked 15, 20 or more years for the same company, find themselves hitting the pavement on the strike lines simply to protect the benefits they have acquired over the years for themselves, it goes without saying, and for their families, or quite simply to protect their jobs. Every day, they see strikebreakers, scabs, take their place and take home their pay. This is unacceptable.