

*Public Service Collective Bargaining*

In the circumstances, the government decided to accommodate the views of those who were opposed to arbitration in principle by including in the legislation an alternative process of dispute settlement directly comparable to that provided in the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act. The basic decision to provide for two separate and distinct dispute settlement processes created a new and unprecedented situation.

It seems, from the minister's words, that compulsory arbitration would have fulfilled the demands of the majority of the associations involved. It appears that the postal workers did not care for this arrangement, and some evidence of that may be found on page 301 in Mr. Kay's brief. I hesitate to suggest that the postal workers were effective in changing the legislation from that providing for compulsory arbitration to its present form, but as found on page 301 Mr. Kay said to the committee:

We are certain it is no secret to the hon. members of this committee that a majority of the members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers are prepared on very short notice to withhold their labour power in order to achieve one or the other of these two objectives: either that the I.R.D.I. act be opened to permit postal workers to bargain under its procedures by direct amendment of that statute or, the conversion of the Post Office Department to a crown corporation. We would not pretend to influence this committee by threat, and we want it clearly understood that no threat is being made; we are merely informing the committee of the deep and abiding sincerity in which postal workers approach the issue of full and free collective bargaining.

If collective bargaining is approached in that spirit there can be no objection to it. Yet I wonder what effect the postal union brief had in changing the final intention of the government as set out by the minister in June and as first proposed in this legislation. Regardless of what the postal unions say, it is my belief that the majority of the associations want the arbitration procedure. In that connection I refer to the Woods committee. There is merit in the suggestion that the postal workers be part of a crown corporation. I say that the right to strike ought to have been excluded from this legislation. The majority of the staff associations do not want it.

I believe the minister said on Friday that the associations will not use that right as the public is against it. When one looks at legislation in other areas, including Saskatchewan and Quebec, and sees what the right of strike in legislation does, the government should consider seriously removing the present clause. The staff closest to us in the house—and we are supposed to be model employers—are not included in this bill. They are not in the legislation. This bill seems to make fish

[Mr. Nowlan.]

and fowl of the same matter at the same time. In accommodating one group of Canadians the minister has forgotten the rights of all Canadians, including the majority of those affected by this bill.

**The Chairman:** Shall clause 36 carry?

**Mr. Langlois (Mégantic):** Mr. Chairman, I have some observations to make on this clause, particularly after listening to some hon. members who spoke last Friday. To a great extent I agree with the principles enunciated by the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings so far as the right to strike is concerned. I was surprised when I read the opinions expressed by the hon. member for Hochelaga last Friday in this connection. He has astonished me before and he has done so again. I do not know whether these somersaults are typical of him. I had taken him to be a man of fairly sound judgment. He brought in such things as freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of the press—all those freedoms which are mentioned in the Bill of Rights. But there is a limit to all these freedoms. Duplessis once said that everybody was talking about rights and nobody was talking about obligations.

● (3:50 p.m.)

I recognize that strikes are a means to an end, not a goal. Strikes are an extreme method of reaching an understanding between the parties concerned. Even so, there are occasions when the government has to step in and block strikes as was the case in the province of Quebec last week. As a former teacher in that province I fully realize that the salaries, working hours and teaching conditions needed improvement. But is it right for an improvement to be brought about at the expense of hundreds of thousands of students who have been wasting their time when they ought to have been following their studies?

We may suffer injustice as individuals but we cannot take strike action when such action will cause social injustice. Two wrongs do not make a right. We need freedom of speech, and we will use it. Freedom of the press is most useful during negotiations. The hon. member for Hochelaga said he had never known organized labour to take advantage of such a situation because those involved in the dispute on the labour side used their own good judgment. They do. Sometimes, however, the workers concerned are not in a position to see the over-all picture. They are not the ones who sit around the table and they are not always given an exact picture when