

Government Orders

union movement that the union members themselves would cave.

I walk to these buildings every morning about 7 a.m., and I greet strikers as I walk along. They are getting positive honks from car horns and people are walking by with thumbs up. I know that was happening in my own riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan. To this point, at least, I believe from what I have observed that the strikers have public sympathy and public support. Certainly there are individuals who have criticized them, not because they are getting hurt, but because they just do not like people being on strike.

I had a discussion with one of those individuals and the hon. member from Kitchener reminded me of it when he spoke. He said they should not have the right to strike. That is not the point. They have, for 24 years, had the right to strike. It was given to them by government.

If you are going to take it away from them, be honest about it and say that with respect to public servants, we need a different way of handling things. It does not even have to be forced. These kinds of arrangements have been negotiated with employees previously by other governments and in other circumstances. It can be done by negotiation, by agreement and the procedure for handling disputes can be negotiated, but you do not, in spite of what the hon. member from Kitchener believes, get harmony by saying that from this day on there shall be harmony. It does not work that way.

But you can get it by sitting down with people and being reasonable with them. That does work. It can work. It is not the time to do it now, I would think, with the government having pushed the situation to the point that it has, but it can work. It is the method that I wish this government could have adopted from the beginning.

The minister of Treasury Board says he is happy to sit down with the PSAC, not necessarily himself, but certainly have his representative sit down with the union representative just as soon as we pass this legislation. I get the impression that events are overtaking that and that something else will be happening soon. In the event that it does not, I think it is too late for him to hope for

some kind of improvement in relations because that is what he is talking about, improving the relations.

Why are relations so bad? Is it because they have not been willing to talk to each other? Why have they not talked? As I said, you cannot talk when one side says: "These shall be the limits on pay increases, the upper limits not the bottom limits." When it comes to the other factors, when it comes to job security, he said in his speech: "We will not accept." When it comes to equal pay for work of equal value: "That is not our business. It is up to the Human Rights Commission." When it comes to contracting out: "We must seek the most effective or efficient way." He did not say: "as we see it", but that is what he meant.

Having said all that, is he going to make friends with the representatives of the PSAC? Why does he not say: "We will not talk, but let us go to the room." That is not the way to establish any kind of rapport between the two groups. The minister has a long way to go if he is going to try to establish any kind of friendly relations with the trade union.

We have been told that we must pass this legislation. We have to have the zero, three and three limits or we will damage our road toward recovery. Is the road to recovery so narrow and so hard to traverse that a 3 per cent increase in salaries to public servants is not feasible? An amount that represents some two and one-half days worth of interest on the public debt, a debt which has been more than tripled by the Tory government in a mere seven years. In spite of that kind of a record, it says that we will damage our reputation internationally, we will damage the road to recovery if we incur expenditures amounting to another two and one-half days worth of interest. Alternatively, this is one-eighth of the amount that we have been spending to keep Canadian forces in Europe looking for Russians who are getting home just as fast as they possibly can. As soon as they can find some place to go to back home, they are going. They are running out of East Germany and running out of eastern Europe. Yet, we have to be spending \$1.2 billion a year. I believe that is changing too. I have not heard the announcement, but I understand that is changing as well.

An hon. member: It is the same as it was.