

Copps), to have this piece of legislation delayed for 30 days in order to give the unions involved a respite in order to try to come to some reasonable agreement with the Government.

The Bill we have before us now is clearly unreasonable. It is not good legislation. It is unfair and discriminatory. It takes from employees of Parliament Hill rights and privileges which they should have which other workers across the country enjoy.

The main argument was set out in a letter of October, 1985, from Jacques Audette, the President of PSAC Local 70390 here on Parliament Hill in which he said the following:

Over one year ago, the Canada Labour Relations Board ruled that parliamentary employees come under the jurisdiction of the Canada Labour Code. This legislation provides the tools with which to deal with the problems we face as workers on the Hill. In forming a union, our intention was to join together and elect representatives who, in negotiating with management, could find solutions to these problems.

The issues of greatest concern were, and continue to be, classification, job descriptions, competitions, promotions, transfers and fear of lay-off or dismissal. These have always been totally up to the discretion of management and there have been serious abuses such as the recent problems with the pension plan, forced overtime hours, and the payment of overtime on a bi-annual basis. Many of us are improperly classified and often do not have any job descriptions. Many of us have applied for promotions and transfers only to have the rules governing competitions changed arbitrarily.

Technological change is occurring on the Hill as elsewhere and even employees with many years experience fear that they will be laid off.

Rather than allay these fears, management has fueled them with major reorganizations and cut-backs in several areas.

Bill C-45 is opposed by both the PSAC and NABET. Their concerns centre on the point that Bill C-45 enshrines in law an employee-employer relationship which does not meet with the employees' approval. The employees want to be governed by the Canada Labour Code, as has been ruled by the Canada Labour Relations Board. I understand that the courts have ruled against that, but courts are appealable. Today we are asking for time so that a fair and equitable agreement can be reached with these employees. They are clearly against this legislation and want to be governed by the Canada Labour Code and to negotiate as do all employees elsewhere in Canada. They see Bill C-45 as a step backward.

The main clauses to which they object are Clause 5(3) and Clause 55(2). These two clauses prohibit unions from referring to arbitration the important matters of job classification, appointment, appraisal, promotion, demotion, transfer, and lay-off or release of employees. These are legitimate concerns and areas for discussion, bargaining, and arbitration which should be available to employees of Parliament Hill as they are available to other employees within the Public Service across Canada, to employees of Crown corporations, and to many other workers across the country. That is the main concern of the employees. We on this side of the House support them and that is why this particular amendment has been put forward.

It is not as though there are not adequately documented areas of abuse. There are many and various examples. Some time ago a senior position became vacant in a technical service. Several employees inquired about a competition, but none was

held. The husband of a manager in another department of the same service was brought in to fill the position on a temporary basis. Several months later a competition was announced. The then experienced husband was hired permanently. The appeal of employees in the service was denied.

There are other examples of abuse and discrimination which have been adequately documented which need redress. Strong legislation is necessary to prevent them from happening again. For example, there was an older female employee with close to 20 years seniority who injured her back and was off on long-term disability for a couple of months. On returning to work she was assigned duties which include heavy lifting and carrying, although her old position still exists. She was told she should apply for early retirement if she was not pleased. Her internal grievance was denied.

● (1210)

Employees of the Library of Parliament were denied maternity benefits for a full year after such benefits were finally extended to House of Commons' employees. The library administration states that an administrative error was made.

I could go on and on documenting instances of abuse, discrimination and inequity in dealing with employees of Parliament. In the cafeteria service all job classifications have been revoked. All employees have been informed that they can be assigned any duties, although many of them held specialized positions for a number of years. For example, two butchers were assigned to drive food delivery trucks. A pastry chef was assigned to washing and cutting vegetables.

The level of frustration and employee harassment in this service is very high. Those of us who have been here for some time are aware that nowhere do we get the kind of faithful, competent, loyal and efficient service that we get here on the Hill. It is incumbent upon us to stand behind these workers. All they are really asking for, indeed all this amendment asks for, is time to come to an equitable agreement.

The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) has stated previously that he is willing to give parliamentary employees the same rights enjoyed by federal public servants. Clearly, though, Bill C-45 does not do that. I refer again to the clauses which prohibit the referral to arbitration of important matters such as job classification, appointment, appraisal, promotion, demotion, transfer, lay-off and release of employees. How can the Minister say he is willing to give these employees the same rights enjoyed by federal public servants and at the same time bring in a Bill which prohibits them from dealing with these very important issues? It seems to me the Minister is not prepared to go so far as to give them equal rights with other workers. The Government could agree to at least a 30-day delay so that some work can be done to arrive at a reasonable compromise. That is the only way to do it, and it is incumbent upon the Government to do it.

What is involved here is not simply a matter of the rights of employees of Parliament, important as that may be. The issue