

Government Orders

employer's last offer? The employer's message will be simply: "Ratify or else".

This is not collective bargaining. It is intimidation and coercion. The government claims there is nothing sinister here. It claims that this is simply another tool to assist the collective bargaining process. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In committee we had the pleasure of hearing not only the Minister of Labour but also the minister responsible for Canada Post who was very gleeful about the fact that these two clauses, 2 and 42, were his idea and his babies. It was clear from any reading of the transcripts that the real target of the government with this bill was the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and with the amendment to the Public Service Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada.

It is indeed disheartening to see public policy developed in this country that serves no purpose other than to satisfy the vindictiveness of a particular member of cabinet. In this instance it was the minister responsible for Canada Post who, as I said, was quite clear about why he introduced the amendments.

It is difficult to forget given the number of times it has been used but it has to be remembered that the government still retains the right to legislate workers and employers back to work.

In the case of public sector workers the government already has extensive powers to ensure essential services. Unlike provincial jurisdictions the bargaining units covered by part I of the Canada Labour Code are quite large. There is CUPW at Canada Post. There are the bargaining units in the railways and airlines. There are the units in telecommunications.

In the case of a serious threat to the public welfare the government can and has ordered the resumption of the enterprise and the involvement of a mediator and/or arbitrator. This is done quickly. Necessary services are restored and the collective bargaining process is either ended with an imposed settlement or the parties are placed into an arbitration process that will result in a collective agreement.

• (1235)

With this directed vote provision there is no speed to the resolution process and there is no involvement of a mediator. The collective bargaining process is simply stalled to the detriment of all.

One must ask just what the point is when all the evidence we have heard demonstrates that from a collective bargaining perspective the directed vote is an unwarranted intrusion. From a strictly practical perspective its use is simply unworkable and extraordinarily expensive.

What is clear is that this provision is politically motivated and is not another mechanism to assist in the collective bargaining process.

If the government was sincere in wanting to enhance the collective bargaining process it would have put all of part I of the Canada Labour Code on the table during the consultative process. It would have followed the lead of B.C. and Ontario and banned the use of scabs. As we saw during the lengthy Nationair dispute and as we continue to witness in the ongoing dispute in Yellowknife, the use of scabs has not only lengthened the dispute but it has also strengthened the resolve of employers bent on breaking a union.

With regard to the directed vote amendment in the Public Service Staff Relations Act one has to question where the employer, in this instance the government, goes with public sector bargaining if it is required to vote on the last offer and the workers say no. Where does the government go? The chairman of the Public Service Staff Relations Board told the legislative committee that this clause is totally unworkable and that if implemented it would cost \$2 million to \$3 million to undertake the vote. The government has chosen to ignore that expert information and we are still faced with those clauses in this legislation.

I want to address some of the amendments that were made in committee. It should be noted that improvements to this bill were made in committee in large part due to the witnesses from organized labour whom we heard. They suggested amendments. At this point I would like to thank the Minister of Labour for agreeing to those amendments.