

*Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act*

There is one other important matter which is completely overlooked, and that is the whole question of technological change. Any Member of Parliament who has been here for any length of time knows how rapidly and fundamentally the operations of their offices have changed in recent years. Technological change is occurring on the Hill as it is everywhere else. Even employees with many years of experience fear they will be laid off. Rather than allay these fears, management has fueled them with major reorganizations and cut-backs in several areas. I do not want to criticize anyone presently or formerly in management, but I am sure that Members know that many of the decisions made in recent years had adverse effects on many of our employees.

I will take a few moments to give some examples of the type of things that have happened in recent years which, in my view, were completely unacceptable and would never have happened if employees on the Hill had the same rights as other employees in the public and private sectors, that is, the right to belong to an organization which could protect them by having their grievances dealt with through discussions between the union and the employer, and by following the usual steps in grievance procedures which are available to all other employees.

An older female employee with close to 20 years seniority in a position injured her back and was off on long-term disability for a couple of months. When she returned, she was assigned duties which included heavy lifting and carrying, although her old position still existed. She was told she should apply for early retirement if she was not satisfied. Her grievance under the present procedure was denied. That could never have happened if that employee had belonged to a union which had the right to real collective bargaining.

As a second example, a technician was hired for a position and was paid below the advertised salary level. It took the individual a year and a half to reach the salary level advertised in the competition. A year later another technician was hired with the same qualifications and started at the posted level immediately. I suppose the new employee was a friend of the supervisor. That would never happen if there was a real union. Here is another one; employees in a technical service are required to attend training courses on their days off and on weekends without pay. When these employees protested, they were told it was mandatory and they had no choice. In what other area would this be permitted? No area where there is a union. These are the reasons workers join unions.

● (1620)

In the cafeteria service, all job classifications have been revoked. This is at a time when the restaurant and cafeteria business has more supervisors and managers at higher salaries than we have ever had. The employees of the restaurant and cafeterias have to suffer because, supposedly, we have to save money. All employees have been informed they can be assigned any duties, although many have held specialized positions for a number of years. This is the kind of thing that is

completely unreasonable and unacceptable. Two butchers have been assigned to drive food delivery trucks, and a pastry chef was assigned to washing and cutting vegetables. Is it surprising that the level of frustration in the cafeteria service is very high? I ask Members who have doubts that this is happening to talk to the people in the restaurant and cafeteria business whom they know.

In a support service a female employee was the object of sexual harassment. Her manager touched her, leaned up behind her and rubbed against her. When she protested, she was assigned to a heavier work load and later given a poor performance evaluation, and finally transferred to another position.

We have just been discussing and debating employer equity legislation. It is ludicrous to be discussing that kind of legislation and listening to all the wonderful speeches in theory, which we have heard from the Government side when this kind of thing happens.

In the cafeteria service an employee cut his hand on the job. He was told to visit the nurse. The nurse told him it was not safe to work and that he should go home. The manager informed the employee he should go back to work or face discipline.

In a technical service a senior position became vacant. 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 now experienced husband was, of course, hired permanently as he now had the experience. The appeal of the employees in the service was denied. That reminds me of the kind of thing that went on in the packing plants in Winnipeg 40 years ago. Workers who wanted to work came down every day with the hope that they would get an hour or two of work, and if they were prepared to give the foreman a bottle of liquor that helped them get a job. That kind of thing has not happened in employment areas for many, many years where unions have had the right to bargain collectively for their workers. It is a disgrace that the kinds of illustrations I have put on the record today should continue in the Parliament of Canada in the year 1986.

This Bill is so deficient that it does not provide adequate means for the people who work on Parliament Hill to lodge grievances which can be dealt with equitably. When I say, "being dealt with equitably" I mean that they can be discussed openly, honestly and fairly between the employee and employer. I do not say that the employees are always right. We all know that employees are like any other human beings, sometimes subject to doing the wrong thing. When the employee has a grievance which cannot be settled, and when the decision made by the foreman or the supervisor is one which he or she cannot accept, the employee, given proper legislation and a union which has the right to grieve on the employee's behalf, given law which establishes the proper and fair system for handling grievance procedures, can rest assured