

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

find that over 1,000 employees have signed cards on at least three occasions indicating their interest in aligning themselves with a certification process on the Hill. In the meantime, the Government has come in with a Bill which would, in a very limited way, begin to recognize the rights of organizations on the Hill. Unfortunately, contrary to the promises made by the Conservative Party at the time it was in opposition, the Bill before the House does not address a number of issues. It does not address those issues which have been highlighted by a number of representatives from PSAC, as well as NABET, as being very crucial to the discussion.

● (1710)

For example, indications that this particular Bill will do nothing to allow an employee voice in certification and classification are obviously of great concern to us. Meanwhile, as the Government introduces this Bill and discussion and debate goes on—indeed, we have been waiting for some kind of Bill for several months—coincidentally, and totally by chance, the Canada Labour Relations Board today announced that it had reversed an earlier decision and would now issue certification orders to certain bargaining units on the Hill. The effect of that particular announcement is that the process of certification has effectively been approved by the Canada Labour Relations Board and certifications on the Hill can begin.

In deciding, together with my colleagues, to move a motion which would cause the delay of the Bill for 30 days, it is not our intention to stop the process, as was suggested by the Government House Leader. On the contrary, it is our intention to allow the employees an opportunity to receive the fullest representation possible within the bargaining process. It seems to me that the particular decision today by the Canada Labour Relations Board is going to impinge very directly on this piece of legislation. In fact it has granted to employees on the Hill the same rights which are currently available to employees in a number of other areas. We know, of course, there are questions of the implications of the freedom of association clause in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There were a number of rights which were fought for and won through the Charter which have in fact been reinforced by an application which has been accepted under the Canada Labour Code.

There is a very valid question raised today as to whether we should proceed with this Bill or whether we should allow the course of events which could lead to a faster and fuller exploration of rights for employees on the Hill. It would be a misrepresentation of our intentions for Members of the Government to suggest that we are attempting in any way to somehow impugn or prevent the valid and due process of certification. That is simply not true. In fact, it is with the support of, and in discussion with the representatives of the movement to organize on the Hill, that we have suggested a 30-day delay in further discussion on this Bill pending the reaction of the Government with respect to the very current and pressing announcement that finally the employees will be allowed to organize under the Canada Labour Code.

Quite clearly, it was an unexpected decision in the light of the discussions which are taking place at this moment in the House of Commons. It is the feeling of the Liberal Party that while the Government has 20 days to respond, it would not want to allow anything to infringe upon the possibility of the Canada Labour Code decision going forward when the federal Government has the legal right and responsibility to respond. We do not know what the response is going to be. We know what the Conservative Party said during the election campaign. We know that promises which were made during the election campaign, specifically with respect to certification, classification and to other rights of employees, have not been respected. In fact, the Conservative Party has flaunted the very promises it made in the past by refusing to accord even those minimal rights. We will be suggesting amendments to address that basic injustice.

At the same time, it would be the position of this Party that a 30-day delay of further discussion on this Bill would permit the Government to move ahead in good faith in light of the current and crucial decision of the Canada Labour Relations Board. It would be my suggestion that all Hon. Members on all sides of the House who would like to have a full discussion of an issue which could affect them very directly, even their own employee relations, would find it in their best interests to take a look at what the Canada Labour Relations Board had to say. I only just received a copy of the decision in my office this afternoon and I have not had a chance to review the particulars. I would like to do so and see whether in fact the suggestion of the Canada Labour Relations Board, in its decision to allow certification, should supersede the Bill which we have before us. Is this Bill redundant? That question has not been properly explored. It is a question which remains in the mind of the union, for one.

The amendment is one way of addressing all the issues surrounding the certification process, and in particular the relationship of the employees on the Hill to the Canada Labour Code, and it would delay further discussion of this Bill for 30 days while we anticipate the Government's reaction to the most recent announcement by the Canada Labour Relations Board.

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to participate in this debate since many of the people who are affected actually live, and certainly all of them work, in my riding of Ottawa Centre. On the other hand, I participate in this debate somewhat in sorrow rather than anger because Bill C-45 falls so far short of what should have been provided and what my caucus, the New Democratic caucus, has been advocating for a long time.

In April of this year, our caucus passed a unanimous motion endorsing the efforts of the House of Commons employees to gain recognition of their union under the Canada Labour Code. Our motion urged the House of Commons administration and the Government to cease the use of procedural and legal techniques which were delaying union recognition for Commons employees. We welcomed your commitment, Mr. Speaker, to the principle of union recognition for Commons