

*Sector Bargaining*

● (1750)

The result of such government action would be to remove the burden of sporadic strikes from the economy. It could have a direct and helpful influence on strikes involving the private sector. The private sector could use a helping hand. Its strike record in the past six years is less enviable. From 1975 to 1980 there were close to 5,000 strikes in the private sector which involved more than 2.5 million people and cost the economy about 40 million lost working days. How anyone can claim there are winners in strikes is beyond me.

The adoption of the bill can only serve to ensure that there will be fewer losers and, if the system works as it should, possibly none. I would go further to suggest that, nearing the end of the proposed three-year period, if the two sides fail to reach agreement, binding arbitration be made mandatory.

If management and union representatives cannot, in three years, settle their differences, someone should have the authority to step in and do it for them and for the rest of us. I am well aware that there are dedicated people on both sides of the bargaining table who take their responsibilities very seriously and work to achieve a fair and equitable settlement. I know also there are people in those chairs who relish and seek to perpetuate the role of adversary. If these people knew there was a mechanism in place, such as binding arbitration to override such posturings, things would probably change. We have to let them know we are serious. We should lock the representatives of management and union in a room, give them only bread and water, and not allow them any dinner breaks until they come to terms, and I am quite sure within a week or so they would be able to hammer out a settlement. For example, the union which affects most Canadians is the postal union, it is usually CUPW, so we would have the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) and Mr. Jean Claude Parrot locked in a room. Then we would be able to see which one has the staying power. I am sure it would not be too long—four or five days—before they would be out.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Darling:** Canadians need a halt put to the chaos of strikes, especially when it involves essential services.

We have to put a halt to transportation strikes during those times when Canadians traditionally travel home, such as at Christmas and in school breaks. We have to put a halt to the disruption of mail services which affects the delivery of government cheques to those in need and affects the commerce of thousands of firms, large and small. We have to halt communication strikes which deprive large segments of the population of their right to know what is happening in the world. Year after year we fumble around with these issues, and year after year nothing happens. Why not? It cannot be that difficult to get our act together. It cannot be that difficult to put the good of the country ahead of the demands of the minority. People have been fed up with the situation for a long time. Now is the time for us to act on their behalf. All the talking in the world does not seem to have done a bit of good. The message we must deliver to the unions and to management obviously has to

come in the form of legislation, a law to show both sides just how serious we are.

Therefore, I urge prompt passage of this bill before us. I hope those of us assembled here will vote to have this bill go to committee. I am quite sure the bill would get a positive response, particularly if we were all given a free vote, because I think deep down members on all sides of the House are fed up with strikes. I guess I am one of the minority here, but I have said it time and again that there should be no strikes in essential services. There should be binding arbitration on the bases I have suggested. I think people who take jobs in the post office, the fire department or the police department should take those jobs knowing they will not have the opportunity to strike. If they want the privilege to strike, let them go to work for General Motors or Ford, in the private sector or elsewhere in the public sector. But it should be a privilege to work in an essential service. Other countries do not seem to have nearly as many labour problems as we do here.

Again, I hope that serious consideration will be given to having this bill passed today and referred to the committee.

**Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to come to the same conclusion as the hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy), namely, that I cannot support this bill because it is impractical, but I cannot associate with the remarks he made about the record of performance of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston). For example, we have no less an authority than the young—although he is quite perceptive—hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty) who sits in this House and contemplates with envy the record performance of the responsible President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Beatty:** It is nice to see you have a sense of humour.

**Mr. Peterson:** I share, with hon. members opposite, the concern about what strikes of any kind do to members of unions, management and to the productivity of Canadians. This is a major problem we all have to face. I can think of five reasons why this bill does not address the issue.

First, in requiring the sectoral approach, and dealing with the Treasury Board only, it ignores the fundamental reality of our present system. We have two groups which deal with labour problems under our present regime. We have two different acts. The jurisdictions are separate. We have to deal with both of those before we can come to grips with this issue. This bill contemplates dealing with only one of them.

Second, and briefly, because time is running out, this bill fails to recognize the way in which the Public Service Staff Relations Act Structures our present bargaining unit. We are not organized along sectoral lines at present. For example, a person who is a clerical worker can move from any department to another within government. This privilege is designed to ensure job security and equality. A person should not lose his or her job if a particular department is abolished. A person should have the opportunity to move from department to department.