

*Private Members' Business*

It is not a partisan issue. But it clearly sends a message from the Parliament of Canada to those men and women who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces, to the families of those who have given the supreme sacrifice in fighting world wars and in Korea.

The message is that we do remember and we are prepared to take unusual steps, such as this bill, a one-page bill. It simply says: 'You do not have to worry. As the world changes and as we get further and further and further from those world wars and the Korean war, because the federal government is going to make sure that at some future point we do not have to worry about Remembrance Day being negotiated away so that somebody has an extra day in the middle of the summer, so it is more attractive to trade that day for some other benefit'.

That is not why Remembrance Day was part of the Holidays Act. It was not so that someone got a benefit. It was so that we would all remember the horrors of war and to give thanks that we live in a country that is peaceful. Most of all, it is that we remember those young men and women who gave their lives in the pursuit of peace on behalf of Canada. That is clearly what the bill does. It does not do any more nor does it do any less than that.

I just want to point out a couple of other things because some members are still saying to me: "Are you sure this is not covered? Are you sure that under the Holidays Act the negotiators for the government through the Public Service Commission does not have to give it?" No, they do not have to give it.

In clause M20.01, it says this is a negotiated item. This is what was negotiated. It says: "Subject to clause M20.02 the following days shall be designated paid holidays for employees". It goes through the list and (h) is Remembrance Day.

If this was in law already it would not have to be a negotiated clause in the collective master agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada. This is the master agreement. It is a negotiable holiday. I do not think anybody in this House thought it was a negotiable holiday.

Treasury Board has some concerns, so I am told, and I understand it. Treasury Board says: "Well, we do not know that we should support this bill. Not because it changes the *status quo*, but it may tie our hands in the future from negotiating things in the collective bargain-

ing process". That is exactly what I am trying to do. There are some crazy trends going on out there.

Remember that it was the post office, a Crown corporation that said in negotiations a year and a half ago that this was a negotiable item. The post office was the first to put it on the table. Maybe at some future time, when this government or future governments are having difficulty with the Public Service unions in the country it will say: "No, we are not going to give you Remembrance Day. We are going to hold Remembrance Day over your head until you give us something back".

It goes completely against the intent of the original legislation. It goes completely against the declaration of Armistice Day back in the 1920s. It certainly goes against the spirit of Canadians who have chosen over the years to keep Remembrance Day sacred.

Treasury Board is afraid this might create a precedent. Somehow somebody else is going to come in with another day and say: "We are going to make sure this is a compulsory statutory holiday that is in law and is non-negotiable".

• (1850)

That is a ridiculous argument. Remembrance Day is a special holiday. There is none other like it in Canada. We have the July 1 holiday. That is a very special day for us in this country. We have Christmas and we have some other holidays as well.

This is the one day that is not meant as a celebratory day. It is meant as a reflective day. We have to remember that it is there in honour of those individuals who gave their lives for this country. It is why it is called Remembrance Day. That is why it is not veterans' day. It is Remembrance Day, clearly.

The Treasury Board's concerns are a little deeper than that as well. We are trying to address this because I know that sometimes bureaucrats get on these things and think if it comes from a Liberal and they are working for the Tory government that they automatically have to find reasons why they cannot pass these things.

I understand that. These things happen. It is a partisan place. This is not a partisan bill, and I want to make that clear. Every member in this Chamber has a legion, as least one, in the riding. Some members have as many as nine. Every legion in the country that has been apprised of this bill has fully supported the intent of the bill. The president of the Dominion Command has written to the