

must monitor what is happening in the mediating sessions. I assume the Leader of the Opposition means by sitting day by day that he will continue to demand that the government pass legislation ending the strike and thus taking away the rights of individuals in that regard.

Mr. Pinard: What an insult to Judge Gold.

Mr. Regan: As the President of the Privy Council has pointed out, this is an insult to the ability of Judge Alan Gold who has just been appointed mediator of the Post Office dispute. It is not helpful to have Parliament peering over his shoulders.

Mr. McDermid: Get back to Bill C-48 then.

Mr. Regan: Mediation in a difficult dispute when the parties have strongly entrenched positions is not something that is usually or ordinarily achieved in a day or two. There are members who are here who are familiar with industrial relations, and who are fully aware that the task of a mediator is a very delicate one. Sometimes it may take a week, sometimes two weeks, sometimes even longer than that to reach a settlement.

One of the great mediators and conciliators of the past few years is Senator Carl Goldenberg. He participated in many important disputes and was able to resolve a good percentage of them. I want to put on the record what Senator Goldenberg once said. It is applicable to the situation with which the Leader of the Opposition has confronted us today. He said that you cannot mediate in a goldfish bowl. No one can mediate if the parties have someone, an organization or a group, such as this, peering over one's shoulder every day.

The hon. member for Ontario seemed to admit this when he said that they had held back today from asking any questions on the subject of the strike so that Judge Alan Gold could start his mediation tomorrow. At the same time the Conservatives are reiterating again and again that they will not allow Parliament to rise, that parliamentarians will be here to peer over the judge's shoulders and that they will insist upon legislation being brought in.

Let me discuss the dispute and the system we have for settling disputes between parties in the public service. The question arises whether people in the public service should have the right to strike. Often you hear the basic question as to whether people should have the right to strike at all. There is no question that people would give you many arguments on both sides of the question.

I will go into the merit of the right to strike in the public service in a moment, but first let me say that if you allow people in the public service to have the right to strike, if the law says that the Post Office employees, if they are unable to come to an agreement, after a vote, after the passage of conciliation, after a certain time period, are allowed to take strike action, then surely it is cynical to take away that right to strike the instant it is used. It is just like a bullfighter with a cape. If we are to follow a system—I believe we should and I

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will say why in a moment—that allows the collective will of groups of people, following statutory pre-conditions, who are unable to reach an agreement with their employer in rare cases to take strike action, then we must not be cynical. We must allow that strike when it occurs to be settled in the proper manner by the parties in negotiation and where necessary with the help of a mediator.

If the Conservative party does not believe in the right to strike, if it does not believe in the right to strike in the public service, then let it say so. Mind you, when the Conservative party was in government, it did not do anything to take that right away or change the system. Indeed, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition has said in the past, in opposition, that there should not be the right to strike. However, when his party formed the government, he said that this question must be very carefully approached and that without the closest and fullest consultation with the parties no changes should be made to the system. I guess that eight or nine months was not enough to have that amount of consultation.

Suppose that one did not have the right to strike. I have to admit that there are many people who have not been intimately involved with the problems of workers getting their rights and good working conditions. They feel that the right to strike should be done away with. They are in error when they say that.

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We must remember that this has been tried in various countries. I will give the example of Australia. A number of years ago Australia passed legislation to the effect that strikes would not be allowed and that compulsory arbitration would apply to the renewal of collective agreements. Well, Australia has one of the highest records of man days lost through strike action of any country in the world.

Mr. Oberle: Except for Italy and Canada.

Mr. Regan: All of these strikes are illegal, but they continue to exist. My friend opposite talks about Italy and Canada. Perhaps he should talk to some of his friends running the provincial governments in this country, because that is where you find the highest statistics. With regard to federal jurisdiction, we have a very low record when it comes to man days lost through strikes.

The question of outlawing strikes and ordering compulsory arbitration sounds simple. However, it has not worked where it has been tried elsewhere. Instead of having legal strikes, you have illegal ones. That is a bad system because illegal strikes can happen at any time. There is not the degree of responsibility in approaching the settlement that there is if you have a proper system of law and order.

Mr. Huntington: It is a rubber stamp system of law and order.

Mr. Regan: Listen to him! I want to quote from Walter Stewart who wrote a public service disputes article a few years