

and ordinary citizens who are trying to go to work or use government services to which they are entitled.

[English]

It is time these picket lines, disruptive and dangerous as they have become, were ended and our employees came back to work. It is time that Bill C-29 was passed so that the zero and three wage policy can be extended to all of the other groups that it encompasses: to the Prime Minister, the federal cabinet, and all members of this House, to the Senate and the employees of Parliament, to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP, and to heads and employees of other government bodies that are non-commercial and not normally self-financing.

Bill C-29 would extend 0 and 3 to a total of 378,000 federal public sector employees and officials and not only to the 156,000 PSAC members.

It is time that the benefits of Bill C-29 were brought home to all taxpayers and that any uncertainty be put to rest that the government might waiver from the economic recovery plan announced in the budget. That recovery plan is working. Make no mistake about it. That is why I commend this bill to all hon. members for passage.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to comment on the bill one last time and to highlight the fact that this bill does something very serious, not only for the specific employees that it affects but for all Canadians.

It removes a fundamental democratic right to collective bargaining. This is a right that Canada has accepted in international conventions that it has signed. It was implemented for workers across Canada in legislation. It was implemented under the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson for employees of the Public Service in 1967 and that has never been abrogated as it is being abrogated today.

It is not coincidental that objections to this bill have come from unions in other public sectors such as provincial and municipal, from the Federation of Teachers and numerous unions that represent teachers and from private sector unions.

• (1040)

People who have any knowledge about the history of labour relations know it is only the actions of workers that stopped 10-year old children from being sent down to the mines, that allowed people to work a reasonable number of hours a day and still have some time for a personal life and for family, that allowed workers to

attain decent, safe, healthy working conditions instead of being required to put their lives at risk just to have a job, and that allowed workers to use their labour in exchange for a decent living which at least allowed them to survive on the money they were earning with their labour.

Collective bargaining rights allow an ordinary worker, who is dependent on somebody else for the very food with which they feed their families and for the money to pay for shelter and buy clothes, some small measure of power to balance off the tremendous economic power that an employer has over the life of that worker and the lives of his or her family.

All Canadians need to be concerned when the government can cavalierly cancel any basic democratic right as it is doing with this bill for a period of two years.

The government did that the night it announced its budget on February 26. It said there will be no collective bargaining. It said this government was not interested even in bringing in a third party mediator, arbitrator or conciliator who might possibly bring some objective evaluation to whether the government is acting responsibly and fairly.

The government rejected, as of February 26, all possibility of a peaceful, reasonable settlement between it and its employees. I want to make clear that the employees have never said they were not willing to live with the economic policies of the government. They have just said that there are other things to be negotiated and they want to be able to sit down at the bargaining table and negotiate those other things.

The minister referred to a number of the effects of the strike. What the minister refuses to do is to take responsibility for that strike. There is not a Canadian who does not understand that this government is lower in the polls than any other government in the history of Canada has ever been. It is desperate to hang on to the shreds of popularity that remain to it and to do whatever it can to build those up. It really does not care who it hurts in the process.

Who it has hurt in the process is not only its own employees but small businesses that are dependent on the delivery of goods and services and people who travel whether on business or to visit family. It has hurt people, as the minister said, our veterans in hospital. It is jeopardizing a large portion of our grain harvest. It is jeopardizing our international trade. It is jeopardizing our reputation as a nation that works co-operatively among the different sectors in society and can be relied