

*Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act*

In the newspaper article I found something else which reminded me of Dickens. I am referring to a quotation of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) in response to an interview by Mr. Ben Tierney and Aileen McCabe, wherein he said:

I would reject controls. And I wouldn't allow my PMO to be issuing rumours that they were coming in while I was saying that they weren't. I think that controls won't work.

Now I should like to turn to what the Leader of the Opposition had to say concerning the budget. He said:

We are relieved that it is beginning to accept that government spending is a major cause of current economic problems . . . it is a step in the right direction.

Earlier I referred to "A Tale of Two Cities" because in this city we are getting two tales from the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, we have witnessed that same approach during the debate on Bill C-124 and its many amendments which are in front of us at the present time. Conservative members at the end of second reading debate voted, with the exception of one, with the government on this piece of legislation.

● (1220)

In committee the hon. members of the Conservative Party time after time pointed out the very glaring errors that are in this bill, yet they talk about voting for this bill. I have just pointed out that the leader of that party has two completely opposing positions on wage controls. What are we to believe?

In regard to the substance of the amendments that we have before us at this time, we have suggested amending Clause 2, the definition of compensation. Let me quote from motion No. 2:

'compensation' means wage rates and benefits directly related thereto, other than pension and paid maternity benefits, but does not include the monetary value of hours of work, leave entitlements, leave for union activities, standards of discipline or any other working conditions;—

The purpose of that specific amendment is to make sure that when this bill is put into force, as I presume the government and the opposition party will make sure this bill is passed, people are still able to negotiate for paid maternity leave; that they are still able to negotiate for pensions which will affect those individuals who will be going on pensions in the near future, not for two years but for the rest of their lives.

We believe that in this particular instance of paid maternity leave and pensions that this government, and hopefully the opposition party who supports the government on this bill, will recognize the very serious problem that would exist in this country if people are prevented from negotiating pension increases and if people are prevented from negotiating paid maternity leave as a result of this clause as it now stands.

The rest of that amendment basically provides that people be able to negotiate on standards of discipline and on other working conditions, and that the monetary value of leave entitlements, leave for union activities, etc., would not be included in the six and five regime that the government wants imposed on this country. So it is an amendment to clarify that compensation is basically the wage rates and the major fiscal benefits of the compensation plan.

With the present definition as proposed by the government we are afraid we could have a situation where the union wants to negotiate for two of their members to be off to investigate

health and safety provisions, that these people could be booked off to do this very vital role of making sure that the workplace is safe, that union people are educated about workplace safety and that as few lives as possible are lost, but under the provisions of this bill it is possible that any attempt to negotiate leave provisions would be considered part of the six and five regime. Therefore, workers would lose even the six and five per cent increases allowed under this bill if they wanted to have some of their union representatives working on health and safety.

So this is a very constructive amendment which I hope the government and the official opposition will accept, because if this bill is, in reality, an attempt to keep down wages and hopefully fight inflation through that method, then a definition of this sort is a constructive definition, a definition which would only increase the good working relationships between union and business and union and government in this country and, as I mentioned earlier, to allow for paid maternity benefits without hurting the financial situation of other workers in that same bargaining unit.

The position of the government, I understand, is that they will now allow, although I am not sure how they are going to allow—I cannot see that in the amendment they propose—paid maternity benefits, that that can now be negotiated through some mechanism. Again, I am not sure what that mechanism is, because the bill and the government amendments do not clarify what they intend to do to allow for collective negotiations.

If the government does allow for collective negotiations in some manner of speaking, then we do not want to see paid maternity benefits included as part of the 6 per cent and the 5 per cent benefits that workers are entitled to or are restricted to under this legislation. We do not believe that paid maternity leave could only be given if all of the workers are to suffer as a result of that.

We believe it is a benefit which Canadian women are entitled to. It is a motion which we have suggested not only at this stage but at the committee stage. We certainly believe in paid maternity benefits, but we do insist that the government exclude that from the six and five regime.

Other amendments that are proposed by us to be debated at this time include amendments 5, 6 and 7. In amendment 5 we are saying that we strike out Clause 4, and in amendment 6 we are modifying Clause 4 if we do not get our way on motion No. 5.

We do not like Clause 4 for a very major reason. Clause 4 allows the government to break its word with government employees. The government has signed collective agreements for 9 per cent, 10 per cent and 11 per cent increases, not much more, because government workers are getting less money and less increases than those workers in the private sector. But this bill provides that the government can ignore the agreement that it signed with its workers for 9 per cent, 10 per cent or 11 per cent increases, that the government can break those