

Private Members' Business

Let us just use an example which we saw not too long ago, the nurses in Alberta. There was legislation in place, but the fact is that legislation did not work. What did the nurses do? They broke the law.

What happens when you put a piece of legislation like this into effect that, in essence, stops 37 unions and thousands and thousands of employees in this country from having their right, to choose if they want to continue to work for an employer when they believe that they are getting an unfair deal. Sooner or later, in something of this magnitude, people will be forced to take matters into their own hands. Legislation is only as good as people will allow it to be, if they have respect for its intent. That is why we have used back-to-work legislation versus mandatory non-strike rules which would, in essence, trample all over people's rights.

I want to use another example. What would happen in southern Ontario if we use this same scenario that the member put to us today for the auto workers? In southern Ontario the auto workers are a big portion of its economy. What would happen if we were to tell them that they were no longer allowed to strike, that they were an essential service because of the effect of an auto workers strike on the whole southern Ontario economy. In fact, I think I can say that it ripples through the whole Canadian economy because that is how big and important that auto industry is to Canada. What we do not say or what I do not hear the members opposite saying is, let's not let the auto workers strike. The hon. member is looking at the situation in very simplistic terms and the fact that the farmer or the producer is the individual who is hurt.

• (1750)

Everyone gets hurt during a strike. Believe me, the workers get hurt, the company gets hurt and yes, third parties get hurt. But the most important part of this whole scenario is that, through a period of many, many years we have built a system, sometimes cumbersome and very slow, but the best system in the world so far, that allows workers to have rights and to negotiate with their employer in good faith. When they feel that the good faith is not there or they are not getting a deal that is necessary to take home for their families and to have the kind of living they are looking for, then they pull their services. That is not too difficult to understand.

I would also like to go back to what the hon. member talked about earlier. Never have I heard a member come forward and say, well, here you go, never mind this but we will use this as a talking point. Are there not other mechanisms to be able to do that?

Perhaps the member could write the chairman of the transport committee and ask him if it is possible for this matter to be put on the agenda for discussion. My colleague from Thunder Bay would tell you very quickly that they would be more than willing to entertain looking at other ways of improving the transportation system, which is what we are really talking about here, and not that we have to pull workers rights to strike or allowing companies to lock out workers or the other scenario when what we are talking about is a transportation system that does not seem to work very well and the modern kind of system that we must have to be competitive.

I would also suggest that the member very seriously consider that over on that side of the House is where the government sits, in case he wondered. If the government feels there are some legitimate problems, it can also put forward a motion that can go to committee that would allow us to look at an issue as large as the transportation system as it relates to the hauling of produce for farmers from the west. To come forward and say, just ignore this bill, it is just a talking point, I do not want to union bash and take away the rights of the workers, but I would like to resolve an issue.

I suggest that he use his staff and the research at his disposal to come forward with something a little more concrete that we can debate and not to use the charade that this is a talking point. In essence, his real intent is to severely handicap workers and not allow them to have their rights. That is not democracy. Democracy may not be the best system in the world for some people but for some of us it is the only system and the price that we have to pay for it is the fact that if we have to allow certain disruptions in this country for a worker to have his rights, then we will do that.

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, entering into today's debate on Bill C-250, I would like to make a few brief comments about the bill and the concerns from someone who comes from northern Ontario and from an area where agriculture is also very important. I also understand some of the frustrations