

Canadian Arsenals Limited

want to preach and pretend that all the Hon. Members will agree with me, but certain things are unacceptable.

The Government is saying: We do not want to be unfair with these people. We are going to improve their situation and accommodate them. However, we are going to do it by order in council. The public might not understand what this means, but I do as I have been a Member of this House for a long time. It means: Give us a free hand and trust us. To do something by order in council means: We shall see to it later; we shall refer this to Cabinet once the Bill is passed.

As for me, I want to know exactly how the Government would proceed, right now while this matter is before the House. Let us face the facts. If you want to take part in the debate, please do so because this will help us to keep going until 5 o'clock. There is no need to do that. Let us talk frankly. If you want to act by order in council, this is what I say: Bring your plan to the House this afternoon and we shall look at it. If we can have an explanation from a Minister, even if it is not a formal amendment, I would be willing to take the word of this Minister this afternoon and to give you a free hand to settle the issue of the pension fund by order in council.

However, we are still being told: You have to trust us; agree to this purchase and we shall take care of the employees. To be frank, I am still not convinced, especially as I know that SNC supports the amendment moved by my colleague for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria), which would give the employees the option—

Mr. Bernier: The people who watch you on television.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Yes, I am happy that people can see me on television and I am also anxious for them to hear you, from the Beauce region. I want to see whether you will support the cause of organized workers as much as I do. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I should address my comments to you.

The amendment proposed by my colleague gave a choice to the employees. They would have been able either to continue contributing to their present pension plan with a few changes for transfers, or else to join the pension plan set up by SNC. This seems logical to me. What I do not want to do is to vote blindly. Do you understand?

An Hon. Member: For a change?

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Yes. For a change. It would make a change for me because, usually, I look—

An Hon. Member: What do you mean by voting blindly?

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): For heaven's sake! It is strange to hear a Government Member speak about voting blindly, Mr. Speaker.

• (1610)

[English]

Did you hear that, Mr. Speaker? I remember something being said in this House years ago that some of us were voting like trained seals. Now someone on the Government side is telling me that for a change we are looking at the content of a motion before voting. That is a precious admonition coming from Members on the Government side.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues opposite—because I said earlier, indeed, that we intended to have the debate go on until 5 o'clock. That is not really our intention. As far as I am concerned, I am ready to let it pass immediately.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Well, now I hear somebody say hear, hear! Very well, we are beginning to agree. If we can discuss a little, we are going to agree.

I simply want clarifications on how those employees will have their pension plan protected. If we could get that, the Bill would go through rapidly, the sale would take place. Not only are SNC employees concerned, but SNC itself is also getting impatient. The company is ready to reach an agreement with the Government, they want to buy the facilities, they want to operate them. We also have contacts with that company. They are getting somewhat impatient. They themselves made an offer to the employees, to the union members who will no longer be. But that does not work. The Government is not agreeing to that. The Government says: Let us proceed with the sale. After that, we will provide for a sensible pension plan. I am saying "Alright, but let us see it now. Let us look at it beforehand".

Because the employees know what they have now, a pension plan which provides for full indexation, and that is very, very unusual in the private sector. It would be amazing were they to retain that easily. Those people are aware of that fact. Moreover, this allows for benefits to their dependents, with respect to inheritance rights. This is not something that is always provided for in private pension plans either, and there is no assurance that they will get that if they are left unprotected, if they are simply delivered bound and gagged to private enterprise.

Will they be able to get a full pension at age 55 as they may do now? There is no assurance of that. Those are some of the assurances we want to have, rather than the vague promise that will be dealt with by way of an order in council. If we could agree to deal with that, the Bill would proceed quite rapidly.

To sum it up, I am asking the Government to be a little less of an amateur in that area—

Mrs. Mailly: That will be some change.