

Industrial Relations

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. member wishes to proceed, he is free to do so.

Mr. Howard: Not that I object, Mr. Speaker, but it is obvious that there is discrimination taking place here.

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. member was responsible for it by his previous motion.

Mr. Howard: I am not in the least responsible for it. The Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Churchill) is responsible for it by picking and choosing and playing favourites with his own members.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena) moved the second reading of Bill No. C-11, to amend the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act (application to civil service).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to provide bargaining rights for civil servants. In effect, it will make the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act applicable to them with one or two exceptions, notably the right to engage in a strike. The other exception is that the report of the conciliation board will be tabled in parliament allowing sufficient length of time to enable the recommendations of the conciliation board to be taken into account by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming) in the preparation of his budget. Although the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Churchill) has indicated his support for this bill perhaps the application of it will have no effect this session, whether or not we have a budget.

That is the gist of it. I hope the government will accept this measure. It would, to a large degree, expedite decent consideration being given to civil servants and discontinue the practice of treating them as second class citizens which, I said, they are not. So long as this or any other government says to a group of people working under it: You have not the same rights as anyone else, that is treating them as second class citizens. Perhaps the Prime Minister, with his well known affection for the government of Saskatchewan, which he tended to decry this afternoon, would look to that government for some guidance in matters such as this, because in that province they do treat their employees with some decency.

Mr. John Pallett (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister): According to the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard)—he was the one who described civil servants as second class citizens; the expression was his; it was not used by anyone on this side of the house—

Mr. Howard: On a point of order; that is another distortion and a misinterpretation of my remarks.

[Mr. Churchill.]

Mr. Pallett: The record will speak for itself. I presume it will remain unchanged. We shall see how it reads when it is printed tomorrow.

The bill which has been introduced is one in which I have some interest because under the former administration I proposed at various times that certain bargaining rights might be extended to employees in certain crown corporations, particularly in the Canadian Small Arms Corporation one of whose plants happens to be in my riding. As a result of those representations, after the administration changed this right was extended to those employees. It was generally well received by them, although some people might have considered that the idea of collective bargaining could not normally be entertained as applied to an undertaking such as this. Nevertheless, it was granted to these employees and as recently as last fall when I was able to go through that plant I found that the workmanship was of the same high calibre as before and that the morale of the employees was of the same high quality as before. As a matter of fact I would say that morale had improved. Thus, the favour which was granted seems to have worked out to the general benefit both of the people who work there and of the plant as a whole. I do not use the word "favour" in its normal sense of something being given. I use it, rather, in the sense of granting something to which the workers would be said to be entitled.

Bill No. C-11 introduced for second reading by the hon. member for Skeena follows a thorough review last year of the recommendations as to the legislation respecting civil servants in this country made by a committee of the house. Extensive representations were made before that committee, there was thorough discussion and, eventually, legislation was dealt with by the house. It seems to me we ought to consider very carefully before we add hodgepodge amendments to that legislation instead of following the normal course with regard to amendments which are introduced to measures of this nature.

A bill such as is now brought forward would affect a large group of people, people who are not second class citizens, as described by the hon. member for Skeena, but first class citizens doing commendable service for their country. That is how I, at least, consider them and that is how I believe most people in this country consider them. My experience has been that one finds a dedication to the public service at all levels of the civil service, and I am sure that has been the experience of most hon. members.

What does this bill pretend to do? It represents, really, an attempt to do indirectly something which was done directly last year