

are happening in a way that is going to get this issue settled.

The parliamentary secretary can stand there and talk about the deprivation of veterans. The government is responsible for the deprivation of veterans.

I also want to refer to some other comments from my colleague on the other side. He referred to back to work legislation that was brought into this House in 1978 and made a point of quoting from a predecessor of mine in the House. I would also like to quote from the same hon. member, the Hon. John Munro, then minister of labour when he introduced Bill C-45 to provide for the continuation of regular postal service operations. What the former member said at that time is quite different than the impression created by the parliamentary secretary this morning.

Bill C-45 was introduced in the context of a pending election and a pending strike by postal workers. It is far from the Draconian piece of legislation that we have before us today, far from the piece of legislation that basically says, "You're going to get back to work whether it is fair or not. You're going to accept binding conciliation whether it is fair or not. You're going to accept the fact that we have loaded the dice in our favour, whether it is fair or not". That is the government speaking. "We're going to by-pass and over-ride every principle of collective agreement we can think of in this act."

I want to quote the Hon. John Munro. I must say that the members opposite who were in Parliament at the time agreed with him, including the parliamentary secretary who spoke just before me, because he did in fact vote for this bill. He stated:

By introducing this bill I am not attempting in any way to interfere in the process of negotiations by officers of the Post Office and the bargaining committee of the trade unions in the Post Office. Nor do I anticipate that the amendment proposed by the bill would interfere with that orderly process in the future—with the single exception of a breakdown in negotiations that could occur during a federal election.

At that time a federal election was pending. Mr. Munro continues:

Government Orders

I would like to assure hon. members that the government continues to rely on the voluntary determination of any new collective agreement by the parties.

Obviously, this government has no wish to rely on the voluntary conclusion of any agreement acceptable to both parties. It wishes, instead, to ramrod and to force its will upon these, the most vulnerable, the poorest paid workers in the Public Service.

The former minister went on to say:

I would be among the first to recognize that public employees have normally used their democratic rights as trade unionists wisely and responsibly.

• (1310)

That is not an opinion obviously shared by this government. It obviously does not believe that it, as a government, can go into a collective bargaining process unforced by legislation and reach any kind of solution.

The Hon. John Munro said further at that time:

Public service unions in Canada have not been strike-happy in the past, and I do not believe they are quick to call a strike at this time.

That is certainly the case in this instance. The workers have reluctantly and belatedly used the right to strike. They have not done this willingly. No worker making \$17,000, \$18,000, \$19,000 a year willingly goes on strike and leaves his or her family with a much reduced income in the weeks just before Christmas. As winter is coming on, with the need for heating, with additional expenses on any Canadian family, no worker willingly does that. No worker willingly goes out on a picket line in temperatures below zero and does it day after day, week after week. They only do it when they are forced to do it and when they are faced by an employer who is unable, unwilling to come to any kind of an agreement with them.

I think the member has at least given his own interpretation—I tread carefully here—has at best given his own interpretation to the words of the Hon. John Munro back in 1978 and attempted to apply them to a situation which is hardly at all comparable. We are not facing an election, unfortunately. It would be kind of nice at this point in time if I thought we were.