

Government Orders

exercise their rights at the ballot box, as well as elsewhere.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, if I may I would like very briefly to direct some remarks toward the proposed amendment.

Let me begin by saying, as I have tried to tell the House before, there comes a time in labour-management disputes when the matters at issue go beyond immediate concerns of that labour dispute and affect the broad public interest. That has been recognized in this House of Commons and in this Parliament of Canada time and time again. It has not been with any relish. Nobody enjoys back to work legislation. At some time Parliament has to accept its responsibility to the general public and introduce legislation.

May I indicate to the House some remarks made by a former Liberal cabinet minister who this very day sits in the House of Commons representing Papineau—Saint-Michel. He said it very well back on October 17, 1978 when he said in this House of Commons:

Unfortunately, however, there are times and situations when the spirit of compromise and the demonstration of good faith so necessary on the part of all concerned are found wanting. In such circumstances the federal government, as custodian of the economy and protector of the public interest, must assume its responsibility.

That is the very case in which back to work legislation is introduced into the House of Commons—not to anybody's particular desire but as a way to protect the public interest and terminate a labour-management dispute and bring about a settlement.

The question that is posed by the amendment may be: "How do you bring about a settlement?" Obviously, you want to do it in the fairest and most expeditious way possible. The choice of the way in which you do it differs from case to case and from time to time and as the circumstances change. In the particular case, as was explained at the legislative committee, it was thought expeditious to name the chairpersons of the two conciliation boards who would deal with the separate disputes between, on the one hand, the hospital services group, and on the other hand the ships' crews group. That was the purpose of naming the chairpersons of those two

conciliation boards, as explained by the minister and by his officials.

If it would serve the purposes of settlement to change that, I am sure there would be a disposition to make that change. But that disposition has to be evidenced, not by members opposite. They represent their constituencies. This is a bargaining situation. We have the Public Service Alliance on the one hand, the Treasury Board on the other. Who speaks for the Public Service Alliance? Not the member from Halifax, not the member from Ottawa West, not the member from Saskatoon—Dundurn. If the officials of the Public Service Alliance of Canada want specific changes made, they can speak in the negotiation that the President of the Treasury Board offered them in this House. Stay at the table and those changes can be negotiated, but not in debate in the House of Commons.

Surely the member from Ottawa West knows that that is not the way you resolve a labour-management dispute. You cannot resolve it on the floor of the House of Commons. It has to be resolved by the parties.

If the members want to serve a useful purpose in the resolution of this labour-management dispute, they should go back to the people they represent and urge them to sit at the table with the appropriate officials of the Public Service Alliance and of the Treasury Board and resolve these matters.

• (1730)

We are here to reflect the will of the parties once that will, that consensus, that agreement is achieved. I do not think, certainly speaking for the President of the Treasury Board, that his concerns are any more than I have stated. If there is a will on behalf of the bargaining parties to come to some agreement, the net agreement can be reflected in the legislation. But if there is no agreement, no meeting of the minds, there is no change that can be made that will advance the resolution of that dispute.

All members have to join in to ensure that this labour-management dispute is resolved as quickly as possible in the public interest, knowing full well that it takes away from the normal collective bargaining process. But we are here because the normal collective bargaining process has failed, just as the former Liberal minister said. There comes a time when it becomes our