

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

trained, says time and time again: "We should really be doing this and this" but the particular person in management says: "No, because I like to play golf at two o'clock or whatever"? I am not saying this is necessarily the case. What I am saying is there needs to be those kinds of mechanisms in place so we can increase the morale of those who do the tough work, whether in relation to Members of Parliament or to the administration of this huge complex. Real changes can then take place and we could see true efficiencies coming forth. We should not just be getting rid of people and shuffling them around.

I must say that the dinosaur egg is being hatched. I think the people of Canada should hear from some of these 211 Conservative Members of Parliament as to why Bill C-45 is the route to go. I certainly intend to transmit any of those speeches to the trade unionists in my constituency.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few comments to the debate on Bill C-45. I do so from the perspective of someone who has been a union member and a member of management, having seen it from both sides.

First, we have to remember that the people about whom we are speaking are not our servants. They are our employees and there is a great difference. I come from the public sector and I know the phrase "public servant" has a certain connotation in the minds of the taxpayers. It also has a certain connotation here on the Hill. We have to keep in mind that these people are employees and not servants. They are human beings and deserve the dignity of having the right to have a union and for that union to have the ability to represent them in the best way possible. In order to represent Hill employees, the union must have the tools which are available to most unions, for example, the right to grievance procedures, the right to strike, and a number of other matters which have been raised so far in this debate.

Let me deal with the right to strike because it is a fundamental right. When we have two sides sitting down to negotiate, whether it is language in a contract, the wording of a job description, the wage and benefit package or the hours of work, the employees only have one thing going for them and that is their ability to withdraw their services. The employer has the power of the dollar and control over their work lives. The workers only have the ultimate power, after negotiations have failed, to withdraw their services.

I find it rather ironic that the House of Commons and everything related to it, as far as the public is concerned, shuts down for two or three weeks at Christmas and two months or more in the summer. Obviously, we can do without Members of Parliament in terms of this Chamber and committees, by and large, for that period of time. Therefore, we cannot argue that we must have security staff, bus drivers, the people who record our words electronically and in-print form and all the other people who work here. If they withdrew their services, the world would not stop, and nor would Canada. Perhaps, if I could be facetious, we might save a few trees because there

would be less *Hansards* printed. But those services are not fundamental.

We cannot argue, as some do, in terms of professions where nurses, doctors, policemen, firemen and so on are essential and should not have the right to strike. There all sorts of opportunities to deal with problems in these very clear instances where workers are considered an essential service. There are other mechanisms in place. In addition to grievance procedures which are built in, there is the arbitration procedure to establish the wage benefits and fringe benefit packages. The workers' loss of the right to strike has in some cases been reluctantly replaced with another mechanism. But here on the Hill what would be the problem if, as a result of an impasse in negotiation between employees and the Government, a particular group decided to withdraw its services as a means of expressing its frustration and desire to reach a settlement which ensures fairness to them? What would be the problem? What if the Clerks of the Table went on strike? Would this place come to a grinding halt? We would rely on you, Mr. Speaker, and your colleagues, to give us direction in terms of clarification. We do that all the time, so you, Mr. Speaker, could perform that role.

There are many other areas. If cafeterias and restaurant workers decided that their working conditions and wage benefits were not appropriate and went on strike we could go across the street. There are other alternatives. So there is no reason why we in the House of Commons should restrict the ability of those employees to withdraw their services if they feel they have no other choice in order to get an agreement which makes sense.

The ability to negotiate job descriptions is also fundamental. Without a job description in which you have some say there is a fuzziness of lines of responsibility, and the management side has an ability to manipulate one's duties without due consideration of whether it is really within "their job description". A job description should not just be laid upon the table and the worker told to do it. There has to be some give and take, some negotiation around the wording and interpretation of the wording. That can be very important. I have sat on the union side in negotiations and worked out job descriptions. As we do in the House of Commons, there was discussion over the words "may" and "shall" which have very specific meanings. If in a job description an employer says a worker "may" do this or "shall" do this, there is a lot of difference in the meaning. The workers and their representatives should have the opportunity to sit down with management and discuss these kinds of things. It should not be arbitrary.

We are getting close to the one o'clock adjournment. I would, therefore, ask permission to sit down and resume again at three o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): It being one o'clock, I do now leave the Chair until two o'clock p.m.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.