

Canada Labour Code

basis of legality is concerned but I want to make it clear that I, for one, do not support the position he has taken. The bill does not say that collective bargaining is compulsory. As I understand the proposal, it is a process which is open and available under certain rules to those who desire to engage in it. As far as employees are concerned, unless the majority wish to enter into collective bargaining arrangements with their employer, there is nothing in the law which says they must do so. In the opinion of the hon. member for Edmonton West this is an insidious brand of dictatorship.

Mr. Woolliams: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I listened carefully to the hon. member for Edmonton West and he never said that at all. He said he hoped a bill would be enacted by Parliament dealing with labour-management relations and that it would be such a bill as to bring about industrial peace. He pointed out that the preamble did nothing of that kind. He never attacked labour, or collective bargaining. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) has always been fair, and I hope he will be fair tonight regarding what the hon. member for Edmonton West did say.

Mr. Barnett: I enjoyed the speech just made by the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams), as I always do, but I hope the time taken for his speech will not be charged against me. I was not attempting to quote verbatim what the hon. member for Edmonton West said.

Mr. Woolliams: Don't waffle, then; set out the facts.

Mr. Barnett: I was saying that his remarks led me to believe the hon. member for Edmonton West is opposed in his own mind to the process of collective bargaining.

Mr. Woolliams: That is a complete untruth.

Mr. Barnett: I think it is a fair interpretation to place on the thrust of his remarks tonight.

Mr. Peters: That is what I got out of his speech.

Mr. Alexander: That is not what I got out of it.

Mr. Barnett: The hon. member for Edmonton West said nobody ever gained anything out of strikes. Well, I do not believe there is anyone in this House who thinks strikes are a desirable element in our society. Nevertheless, I cannot subscribe to the view that all strikes have been fruitless. I recall being personally involved in three strikes before I came to this House. One was a strike to gain recognition of the existence of a union, and for the right to collective bargaining. This is not a right whose value can be estimated immediately in monetary terms, but in my opinion this was a justifiable and necessary strike.

The second strike was one in support of the principle of a 40-hour working week. It sounds academic now to be told that people had to strike to get a working week of that duration. However, in those days, if an employer told his workers to work six days a week for 12 hours each day, the employees were obliged to do so or risk losing their jobs. That strike, in my opinion, was necessary and socially desirable.

[Mr. Barnett.]

The third strike in which I was involved was a strike to gain recognition of the principle that working people who were paid by the hour or by the week were entitled to a vacation once in a while without loss of income. I remember hands being held up in horror at the idea of paying someone when he was not doing anything. But why not recognize the work of people other than those engaged in the professions?

Mr. Woolliams: Yes, but don't you think of labour sometimes getting into the professions? Don't you think the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose) is in a profession? He is a useful man.

Mr. Barnett: The hon. member for Calgary North says the hon. member for Edmonton West was talking about industrial peace.

Mr. Woolliams: Right.

Mr. Barnett: Of course, he was. And if the hon. member is in favour of industrial peace I agree with him.

Mr. Woolliams: Good.

Mr. Barnett: But the nub of the matter is this: just how does one go about achieving industrial peace. Is it something which is imposed or is it something which comes about as a result of discussion and negotiation?

Mr. Woolliams: Or irresponsibility.

Mr. Barnett: Or is it something which comes about as a result of the development of experience in the relationship between workers on one side and management on the other? We are a long way from having arrived at any seventh heaven in the development of peace between employers and employees. I do not say there have not been occasions when the fault lay on one side rather than on the other. What I am saying is that an attack on the concept of collective bargaining is not an approach which is likely, in any society which calls itself democratic, to move us toward a state of industrial peace.

• (2100)

With regard to the principles contained in the preamble and the way they are spelled out in the bill, the hon. member suggested that the worst means that could be used to bring about a settlement if the situation reached the stage where it seriously affected the public interest would be to introduce a bill in the House. I do not agree with that contention. I think that approach is far more apt to bring about a settlement that would be acceptable to both sides than would the kind of Star Chamber methods that have been used in the province of British Columbia under a law that was pushed through the legislature enabling one minister in secret to sign a document ordering the workers to do such and such.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): When did I suggest that alternative? Come, now.

Mr. Barnett: I suggest that the only way in a free society in which stoppages of work or industrial disputes can be settled in what we consider in the ultimate sense to be a democratic way is by taking action through the elected