up to me to complain about some of the administration's unilateral decisions. For quite some time I have been hoping that our employees might be covered under an acceptable collective bargaining system which would guarantee fair treatment. More significant still, they would have their say about the way they are treated, as is the case now for their fellow workers in some other Government departments.

Let us look at some of the more frequent grievances drawn to our attention in recent years. Staff reductions in certain sectors is one of them. I did not have time to check into all these allegations, but I have been told that maintenance staff cut-backs have reached 40 per cent in some cases. I have no supporting evidence but if the employees were unionized and could confront the employer these figures might be verified and the employees would be in a better position to defend themselves against cut-backs.

They also talk about reductions of some benefits which had been considered as vested rights. For instance, it is now more difficult for newer employees to get days off, and the latest trend is to hire even more part-time employees. Employees who thought they had permanent jobs are worried that they may eventually be displaced by part-time workers. More and more services are contracted out to and provided by the private sector. We can appreciate that some employees are afraid to learn practically overnight that, as a result of an arbitrary decision, their work will be done by a local firm, yet they did not have a chance to bargain or defend themselves.

Various comments have been heard about questionable hiring and classification practices. I do not want to exaggerate, but I would simply say that some people claim that promotions are not always based on merit alone. Without giving specific examples, I would point out that if we had an acceptable collective bargaining system some of these points which are now the subject of grievances would be discussed directly with the employer and settled amicably rather than continue to feed the rumour mill on Parliament Hill. Employees who feel they have been shortchanged keep chasing Members up and down the corridors to argue their case and, now and then, some of their complaints are picked up by the media. Hence the bad reputation of the House of Commons as an employer, something which should not even exist in 1986.

I would say therefore it is important and essential, in our Party's view, that our employees should join a union and have a collective agreement in which they would participate and under which they would be reasonably protected. Unfortunately, although Bill C-45 looks in that direction, it has flaws that will have to be remedied, if the legislation is to have both the support of the Liberal Party of Canada and probably more important still, the support of those who will be using it, those who are to be protected, namely the employees of the House of Commons.

For instance, I would like to point out that one of the provisions that needs the most to be amended is Clause 5(3) of Bill C-45, because it would prohibit the negotiation of certain problems that are linked primarily to classification, job description, employee remuneration and job evaluation.

So this is one of its major flaws. How is it possible to prevent employees from negotiating the classification system under which they work, which sets up the level at which they will be working, their job descriptions and above all their level of remuneration? There is reference to salary. In fact, there is no one in any collective bargaining process, even in the private sector, who cannot negotiate both the level of employee remuneration and job evaluation.

There is also Clause 55(2) dealing with staffing. In effect, it prevents any possibility of sending to arbitration any matters for instance dealing with appointments, job evaluation, promotion, demotion, transfers, lay-offs or dismissals, all matters that are subject to grievances under any collective agreement. Those two most contentious areas could not be referred to third party arbitration. That flaw in the legislation will have to be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, let me bring to your attention, for instance, the area of classification as viewed by the Public Service Alliance, and I quote from documents they were kind enough to make available to me: "The Public Service Alliance of Canada had the chance to evaluate at close range the classification system as applied in the House of Commons."

And they gave an exemple—I am concluding, Mr. Speaker—concerning messengers who filed a grievance in 1982 for having been reclassified from GS-4 to OP-2, and it is obvious that following that decision they are getting $5,000 less in salary today.

One will understand that in a normal collective agreement system, it would have been very hard to negotiate a $5,000 salary cut.

In this instance, since there was no collective agreement, an arbitrary decision was reached.

Mr. Speaker, I am giving that example only to illustrate the main thrust of my point, which is that the legislation is in dire need of amendment.

• (1140)

[*English*]

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, good democratic government operates with the consent of the governed. Bill C-45 is an attempt to deny employees of the Hill, the governed in this case, from the rights which over a half a million workers under federal jurisdiction enjoy under the Canada Labour Code. Therefore, this Bill is an attempt to put one group of employees in a situation much different from the one in which their co-workers in other parts of the Government find themselves. Hill employees have been without protection from either federal or provincial laws and they continue to be so. That was a bad situation because the employees were in a no-man's land in which the employers could do what they pleased, and quite often did.