

*Air Traffic Controllers*

Speaker, I recall quite well an earlier dispute in which I took an interest. I recall the agreement which was made between the Post Office and the postal workers after the last strike. The increase offered was clearly in excess of the guidelines in every way. It went to the AIB and the AIB rolled it back. So what did Bryce Mackasey, that great friend of the worker do? He took it to the cabinet and the cabinet overruled the AIB. Therefore it seems to me the government has the power to do what is fair and right in a particular situation affecting its employees.

In this instance the government is asking parliament to take it off the hook and save its skin. Well, if the people of Canada do not get the story properly through the media, it is not my fault or the fault of my colleagues in this party. I have described exactly what the government is doing. It is shirking its responsibility. Which brings me to the other question in my mind—what is the explanation for this, what is the reason behind it?

It is no secret whatsoever that the cabinet is top heavy with right wingers. Things have a tendency to sneak up. It is not surprising the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) should be able to find a home there—in fact he is to the left of most of them. Perhaps I am unduly suspicious, but sometimes I think there is a Machiavellian move under way. The Minister of Transport was interviewed on Sunday morning on a CBC program—I know he is going around saying he was misquoted, but these words are taken from the transcript of the program. He is quoted as having said:

● (2030)

... in cases like this (the air controllers' strike) we are going to have to very seriously consider whether or not that right to strike is at all appropriate.

The government is sensing a mood left by the National Citizens' Coalition. One only has to take a look at the ad placed in the *Globe and Mail* this morning indicating that there ought to be a removal of the right to strike in the public sector. One has to give the Minister of Transport credit for sensing the public mood.

**Mr. Benjamin:** That was one of their boys.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Yes, he is the honorary president of the National Citizens' Coalition. Because he is sensing that mood, we are finding this right wing shift of the cabinet and the government in trying to absorb all the Tories' natural allies and supporters.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Right on. The Tories have had it.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** In effect, that is where he is headed. There was another article in this morning's *Globe and Mail* under the name of Geoffrey Stevens.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Who is he?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** I suspect he is the mouthpiece for some insider in the bureaucracy or in the cabinet.

**An hon. Member:** The NDP Party.

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

**Mr. Rodriguez:** He is promoting that same sort of philosophy through the media and across the country.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** The NDP has no mouthpiece.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Yes, we have Lubor Zink.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** The NDP has no mouthpiece, only a mouth.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** It seems to me that is what is afoot. They are trying to remove the right to strike from the public sector. They want us to return to the past.

The right to strike is a basic right of the worker. It is the only thing he has. The challenge is to embark on a collective bargaining process, and the challenge is to stick with the issue throughout the process to a successful conclusion. To have the right to strike removed takes away the right to collective bargaining, which is the basic right of workers no matter where they live or work.

When I was teaching school I was told that school teachers were essential workers. One year in North York in Toronto the garbage collectors went on strike. They were not supposed to be essential workers, but with every passing day they became more essential. It was interesting to see the transformation in the newspapers and the media. They were talking about the removal of their right to strike.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Remove the garbage from the media.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** The government has suddenly discovered it has a problem on its hands with respect to collective bargaining and the air traffic controllers. I am an unbiased person when it comes to judging the Liberal government.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Rodriguez:** The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling) is aware of the fact that I am serious about that. I am an objective person when it comes to the government's performance. We are heading toward a serious situation right now, and I am referring to the postal workers. We are faced with the same evasive tactics—

**An hon. Member:** Order.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** I am sure that in the middle of the fall this year we will be here debating legislation putting the next group of workers back to work, which will be the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

Where is the good faith bargaining when we have a government which is committed to taking the easy way out by using parliament to legislate workers back to their jobs before they are in a strike position? It seems to me that has been circumvented completely.

As I have pointed out and as other speakers have pointed out, the question of parliament putting into effect a collective agreement for the workers is contrary to the precedents of this House. It is something which has never been done before.