

Many of my colleagues criticize me for what appears to be an anti-labour stand taken from time to time in the House of Commons. I have said there is no democracy in the industrial relations process in this country. I have said that unions and employers often act irresponsibly. As a matter of fact, in defending a private member's bill in this House I have said on a couple of occasions that the freedoms and rights of the individual are being eroded in this country as a result of the certification process to which we adhere.

● (1652)

I should like to give hon. members an example of what I mean. Just recently I received a letter from one of my constituents, who is an employee of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, enclosing a copy of a letter he had received from the first vice-president of CUPW, André Beauchamp. My constituent says that he is relying on me to defend, in the House of Commons, his personal rights and freedoms which he feels are offended, indeed endangered. I should like to place part of this letter on the record. It is addressed to all local presidents across the country and quotes article 4.74 of the new national constitution which reads as follows:

4.74 a) The national director convenes the regional executive committee and the local presidents to his region once a year in order to: "Ensure that local officers comply with the national policies and orientation of the union in their attitude toward the employer at Union-management meetings, counsellings, etc., and avoid any suspicion of collusion with the employer by refusing to participate in recreational events, sports events, dances, distribution of prizes and trophies, collaboration to employer newspapers, etc., in order that the integrity and independence of union leaders be safeguarded in their dealings with employer representatives and that members themselves comply with this orientation.

The letter then goes on to define sports events in this way:

Sports events means softball tournaments, hockey tournaments, golf tournaments, curling bonspiels and any other events that will bring you into contact with members of management.

This policy should be enforced and explained to the members.
Management is trying to show two faces—

In the case of the Postmaster General (Mr. Blais), that may not be too far out.

—one during working hours and another outside the workplace; we know from experiences that this does not work out for the benefit of our members.

In solidarity—

That is signed by André Beauchamp, first vice president. I ask, Mr. Speaker, is my constituent justified in feeling that his personal freedom is being infringed? I say yes. If he wants to work as a public servant in the Post Office, or anywhere else in the public service, he is compelled to join this union. In earning his livelihood as a public servant, he cannot fraternize with his employer. He cannot participate in softball tournaments. He cannot curl. He cannot do the things which I suppose people do behind the wicket boxes in a post office. There is dire need for fundamental change in our industrial relations process in this country as long as any one of the partners to this tripartite arrangement of government, labour and management adopts this kind of stance.

What are some of the problems we are facing? Last year we had the world record for lost man-years. What a dubious distinction! Our trading partners in the world are not at all

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amused by the kind of behaviour which our industries demonstrate every time they demand that a certain delivery contract be filled, or when our transportation system breaks down.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Those figures are not accurate.

Mr. Oberle: The minister says the figures are not accurate. I wish he would set the record straight. Perhaps Italy again managed to hold the prize for yet another year; but our figures indicate differently, that Canada does have the worst record in the world for lost man-years resulting from strikes, lockouts and shutdowns. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, there is gross exaggeration of the adversary system, and the letter I have just put on the record is a perfect example. There does not seem to be any forum in this country for business, labour and government to get together, as is the case in more advanced and more refined industrial countries with which we compete.

The problem is that there is no true industrial democracy in this country. The kind of industrial democracy that we have is the kind our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) espoused when he said to a press conference in London the other day that he favoured a one-party democracy as a viable option for this country. May I remind my colleagues that a one-party democracy is what exists in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other Iron Curtain countries.

It is about time freedom of association, one of the cardinal principles of democracy, is restored in this country. Freedom of association means that a member of the work force should have the inalienable right to access to a union. It should also mean the right not to join a union if the individual so wishes. The fact is that only about one-third of this country's work force has the option of joining a union; two-thirds have no access to any union.

In order to make fundamental changes in our industrial relations in this country, the minister must address himself to legislating the conduct of unions so as to provide access to their membership for all workers in Canada, which is not the case now. With this bill, the minister seems to want to fill the vacuum by legislating holidays and health and safety regulations within a plant. He expects this to solve the problem. The fact is that it will not.

We must seriously examine some of the industrial relations models which other countries in the western world have adopted, such as those which provide that all persons have access to a union, that no one shall be compelled to join a union. Under the European social charter, unions do not have the right openly to support just one political party, compelling their membership in the union concerned to support that one party. Management should also have the right, as they do in more advanced industrial countries, to join with unions in reacting to legislation and to demands made by the other two partners, government and labour, in the economic process.

I am pro labour, Mr. Speaker, pro union. I believe that union power in this country must be solidified, as it is in other parts of the world. In the West German model there are 16 unions, and every worker in the country has access to one of