

Staff Relations Act. The government has refused that request year after year. The unions had to stay with the public service staff relations legislation which is under the direction of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen). But now—and this is what I find ironical—when an election is coming along, who brings in this bill to amend the Public Service Staff Relations Act? Not the Deputy Prime Minister as President of Privy Council, responsible for the Public Service Staff Relations Act, but the Minister of Labour. He is the minister under whom the postal workers have wanted to be for years. It is he who brings in this bill. Is it to do what they want him to do? No. It is to give them the one provision of the Canada Labour Code which they do not like. It really takes a lot of gall.

The minister is behind the curtain now—I see him smiling at himself—for it really takes a lot of gall to seek to give these workers the one provision under the Canada Labour Code which they do not like. He wants to change the rules in the middle of the game.

CUPW has been a problem. It has seemed to be a nuisance, an inconvenience to the Treasury Board and to the government. Moreover, the public is annoyed when a strike occurs. But what kind of a place is this if we pass rules and then say to minorities we do not like, “We shall not allow you to take advantage of these rules.”

If the government thinks this is going to work, it is out of its mind. There is no denying that CUPW is what is described as a militant union. If, in the middle of May or June, the point is reached at which under the old rules the union has a right to strike, and if it is told it cannot do so because of an act passed by this parliament, the likelihood of a wildcat strike is so high that it is a wonder to me the government does not realize that it would have been far better to have dealt with this whole situation on the basis of reason and understanding rather than on the basis of this sword of Damocles. I might add that perhaps that was not the phrase to use, because the sword of Damocles never fell, but this is one which will fall if the union should exercise the right they possessed at the start of the process.

Let me say one other thing about the rule under the Canada Labour Code which is now being transposed into this bill. Under the Canada Labour Code it is a general rule applying to any unions which come under the provisions of that labour legislation. In this case, though, it is a specific clause relating to one specific union and one specific contract negotiation. The bill is designed especially for CUPW in May or June of 1978. I think somebody over there is out of his mind to bring in such legislation at this time.

I know that the special joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons which met for a year and a half and dealt with the Finkelman Report recommended that a general Clause such as the one in the Canada Labour Code be placed in the Public Service Staff Relations Act but, as members of that committee will recall, that was one of the reasons I voted against that report. If I recall correctly, when that report was finally brought to a vote there were 11 votes in its favour and one against. The 11 votes were cast by the Conservative and

### *Postal Service*

Liberal members on the committee, and I was the one who voted no.

I have taken the view that the increased penalties, stricter conditions and all the other things that are now in Bill C-28 amounted to a green light to the government to be so severe as to damage irrevocably the whole collective bargaining process available to public service employees. That is one of the dangers I see attached to this bill. I know it is a simple one-page bill. But beware of simple, one-page bills. It is a bill which would put into effect in the case of this union one of the provisions which is contained, along with many others, in Bill C-28.

I feel very strongly about Bill C-28. The things it does to limit the rights of collective bargaining in the Public Service, the exclusion of persons, additional penalties and all the rest, are leading to the point at which we shall see collective bargaining in name only in the Public Service. Mr. Speaker, you may say that Bill C-28 is not before us today. That is so. Instead, we have Bill C-45. It is a beginning. It is a first step.

I am sorry my friends in the Conservative party, who do not like this legislation any more than I do, say they intend to vote for it. In that case we shall have put on the statute books one of the provisions which is contained in Bill C-28 and it is only a matter of time, in my view, until the great principle of collective bargaining which was embodied in legislation under Lester Pearson in 1967 becomes so much form and very little substance. A far better way to deal with this situation would be to continue to rely on the negotiating process of collective bargaining and to continue to rely on an appeal to reason.

● (1642)

For all their militancy, members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers are Canadian citizens. They are very much concerned about the election process as well, and I think that there just might be a chance, if we do not pass this bill, of appealing to them, if they have a right to strike during the election period, not to do so. The appeal might fail. The strike might come off anyway, but if we do not pass this bill, and if we rely on reason and a sense of fair play, there is a chance that they will not do it. However, if we pass this bill when we try to appeal to the union not to proceed with a strike, how much of a response can we expect to get when the members of that union know that behind all of those appeals to reason will be Bill C-45, which says that they cannot strike anyway.

Decent labour relations are extremely important to our democratic way of life. I cannot go along with some of the ideas my friends to my right have as to how these things might be solved, but I will at least give them credit for thinking about things and trying to come up with something new. However, my friends across the way are not coming up with anything new. They are coming up with something very old, just prohibition. “No, you can’t do it, we are boss and it has to be that way”. If we do this to one group of employees in the Public Service, other will fear that it is coming their way too, and it will not be long until the whole question of public service labour relations is in a hopeless mess.