

*Labour Conditions*

kind of atmosphere wherein parties to a dispute will no longer feel there is much point in engaging in serious collective bargaining, because they will know that in any event the government will step in, appoint a commissioner under the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act and say: You are going to accept whatever the inquiry commissioner decides, regardless of your collective bargaining.

Just at the time members on the treasury benches have been lauding the fact that the government of Canada is introducing collective bargaining for those in the public service of this country, they come into the house with a bill that takes the feet right out from under the whole principle of collective bargaining. It makes the measure for collective bargaining in the federal service a hollow and meaningless thing.

Surely the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (Mr. Marchand) and the other members of the government are able to see the implications of this piece of legislation and should not attempt to force the members of the house to accept this method as a quick and easy solution of a problem which the government found to be a difficult one.

Before I resume my seat, Mr. Speaker, I ask once again whether the Minister of Labour will not agree to accept the amendment that is before us, so that this whole matter may be considered in committee. If this were done we would perhaps have a better understanding of the whole situation, and in an atmosphere of good faith would be able to arrive at a meaningful solution to the problem this measure was introduced to solve.

**Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming):** Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of repeating the arguments that have been made in this debate, but I think a number of things have been overlooked in the negotiations carried on by the minister. I believe the reason they have been overlooked is in part due to the lack of experience of the minister in a field in which the situation is different from the fields of labour relations in which he has had experience. For this reason the minister may have been working under an extreme handicap. I believe there is another factor in respect of the negotiations in which the federal government has participated in this situation. The mediators the government engage on behalf of the Department of Labour are not particularly highly skilled, and do not

command the respect that should be commanded by them and the department.

• (9:20 p.m.)

It has been demonstrated not only on this occasion but on others that a man of the calibre of the chief mediator whom we had in Ontario for four years, and who had reached international stature through his ability to bring parties together is not available in the federal department to be appointed to such a task. As a result, the negotiating parties faced the difficult negotiations which they have had to handle recently without the assistance they should have had and the minister had to handle more of the negotiations than would otherwise have been necessary.

I know that hon. members are getting restless, as they indicated earlier in the afternoon, and are already concerned about this situation which is backfiring, because if the terms of this legislation are carried out they will be bound by them and already they are faced with a wildcat strike. It appears to me that this situation will be duplicated in many other industries and the accomplishment which we thought had been achieved will be lost for some time as a result of this legislation.

I am surprised, Mr. Speaker, at the line taken by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It is perfectly all right to split hairs regarding whether or not there has been agreement on the part of the workers or the management in the memorandum, but this matter really was not spelled out. However the agreements indicated the scope and field under which the parties were willing to operate. The terms of the memorandum of agreement lead to negotiations regarding the implementation of the actual contract and were generally accepted by labour and management as binding. I think the minister must have signed such memoranda of agreement. He will agree that there was an understanding that the terms in the memorandum would be adhered to by the two parties. I am sure he is aware of the difficulty that he would have in renegotiating the terms agreed upon and that he would have trouble with the parties because they would want to know the exact terms of the memorandum of agreement before ratifying it. This is often done before a contract becomes legal and binding.

The government may not realize it, Mr. Speaker, but they have now decided to interfere in what is really a family affair. They may find themselves in a position similar to

[Mr. Barnett.]