

responsibility for negotiations within a government department under a responsible minister. The Civil Service Commission would then be left free to maintain the merit principle in recruitment and promotion. The British example combines the advantages of theoretical consistency with practical success.

I agree with Professor Frankel. I think that the government in its proposal to set up the Public Service Staff Relations Board is taking the right course. In a provincial government where the number of employees is smaller a public service commission can fulfil the dual role, and I do not think the theoretical difficulties are very serious. But in a very large public service such as that of the federal government I think that the idea of setting up a Public Service Staff Relations Board which will act for the government in the carrying out of these negotiations is fit and proper provided, of course, that the Public Service Staff Relations Board is not hamstrung by the Treasury Board so that members being sent to negotiate are told: Your job is to hold the line, there are going to be no increases; provided you come out with the same sized wage bill as last year you can sign the agreement.

I am sure that the Prime Minister and the chairman of the Treasury Board realize that there will have to be constant liaison between the Treasury Board and the Public Service Staff Relations Board in order that this board will be able to take full cognizance of the arguments presented by the employees with respect to rising costs, with respect to comparable classifications and comparable salaries in the private sector and in other jurisdictions, and in order that it will have a sufficiently free hand so that there can be genuine collective bargaining.

I say to the government that if you send the Public Service Staff Relations Board into these negotiations with its hands tied this legislation will be a farce and will not provide for genuine collective bargaining at all. You would just have a series of conferences which would attempt to wear the civil servants down to the point where they must either sign an agreement they do not want to sign or resort to strike action.

I hope, and I feel reasonably sure knowing that some members of the government are genuinely interested in this matter, that the negotiating team for the government will get sufficient—

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted for his speech has expired.

23033—269

Public Service Collective Bargaining

Mr. Pearson: Continue.

● (5:40 p.m.)

Mr. Douglas: I am almost finished. I thank the committee for its indulgence. I feel sure there will be sufficient flexibility and freedom of action given to those who will be negotiating on behalf of the government to enable genuine collective bargaining to take place. I believe the government will get a good response to the step it has taken today not only from the people of Canada generally but from its own employees and from the employees of its agencies. My experience has always been that when you treat people with dignity and maturity they respond in kind. When you give to our public servants a new power, a new responsibility, they will, I feel sure, act accordingly and in no way abuse the rights and prerogatives which this proposal would give to them. On the other hand, the government has to do everything it can, and this house has to do everything it can, to see that the employees have no reason to feel that the legislation does not provide for genuine collective bargaining.

I wish to make special reference to the question of grievance procedures. The Prime Minister mentioned this subject. Grievances have to be dealt with promptly; there has to be machinery by which the grievances which employees take to their bargaining agents can be examined and rectified should some error have been made. Furthermore, there should be the right of appeal. I take it that grievance procedures ought not to be the subject of strikes. But there has to be some right of appeal if a disagreement between the two bargaining groups cannot be resolved. The Prime Minister said there will be provision for the avoidance of strikes during the life of an agreement. However, one has to consider the possibility of a violation of an agreement. If one party is convinced that the other has violated an agreement and if after discussion it has not been possible to remove the disagreement, it seems to me there should be a right of appeal to some outside body which would make a finding on the matter.

I hope the government will be prepared to be bold about this point when it brings down the legislation. I hope it will have faith in the public service. I believe that if we give these people the rights and privileges to which they are entitled as free citizens of this country they will accept their responsibility and discharge it having due regard to their obligations as servants of the people of Canada.