

Canada have had a considerable overdose of distrust, hostility and recrimination. There are those who say that our adversary system in management-labour relations is unlikely to work very well unless there is a more effective means of putting the issues on the table at the national and regional levels. I think this idea has a lot to commend it.

Similarly, we need better data. Unless our unemployment figures and statistics relating to the cost of living are brought up to date, we are going to experience considerable difficulty. You will have labour and management arguing over what is the unemployment level, or the number of man-days lost through strikes, absenteeism and industrial accidents.

The minister believes that tripartism is of some importance as a means of permitting government to become more involved in labour-management bargaining. Presumably, the minister's idea is that when the economic pie is cut up, the discord which arises when negotiating some 10,000 collective agreements will be muted by an overlay of consensus and compromise. No government in any industrialized democracy has gone this far and shared its power with big business and labour. However, in Sweden and West Germany, government has drawn labour and management into the process of economic management, though remaining, as indeed it should and must, the senior partner in the firm.

At the broadest and most fundamental level, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me there are two main objections to this kind of tripartism. I think it can be said that this question has been discussed with labour groups. First of all, it largely excludes from power many constituencies, such as consumers, small businessmen, housewives, students, the retired, the unemployed and the unorganized worker. Consider the fact that about 30 per cent of the some ten million workers in Canada are unionized. I suggest that is a significant consideration.

The question to ask is this: Can we reasonably assure ourselves that the benefits of a more harmonious relationship among big government, big business and big labour will exceed the additional cost of shutting out the rest of society? Tripartism is not a broadening of the base of power in society but, rather, an elitist reaction, as a result of which big government and big business would agree to accommodate big labour in reaching decisions which were not necessarily in the interests of society as a whole.

Although tripartism might lead to greater efficiency, in time it might lead to economic management which would be more centralist, more authoritarian and less democratic, since about seven million Canadian workers would be largely left out of consideration except for the democratic process of parliament. We all know, Mr. Speaker, how ineffective parliament is in a given situation when it comes to dealing with the problems of labour and management.

We will continue to have management and labour settling their differences without the services of the government as matchmaker. However, generally speaking, both management and labour have been critical of what the government does. They have said that there is too much government. They have said that there is too little government. They say that govern-

ment is ineffective. They say there are too many controls, and then they say there are not enough controls.

This leaves multipartism to consider. Can we bring to the process the collective wisdom of a wide group of people—which, in effect, is what parliament is? I doubt that this will be very successful, though discussion of this issue has not really crystalized. Personally, I feel there is much to be said for the adversary system, the traditional system. In the last 25 years we have had relative labour peace, and as a result we have been unwilling to accept that labour-management differences have yet reached the crisis point. The minister will continue on as he has in the past. Problems between labour and management will sort themselves out without there being too much government interference, government being asked to intervene only when necessary.

● (1542)

Turning to the Canada Labour Code, I would like to point out that section 59(4) of the code currently prohibits the dismissal of pregnant employees only if they have compiled twelve consecutive months of continuous employment. That condition is now to be removed altogether, but I suggest the problem with regard to pregnancy is not solved that easily.

I suppose legislators feel that being pregnant should not be a job disqualification under any circumstances. However, with certain people pregnancy is almost incapacitating. As long as pregnant employees can do their usual work, no one complains; but in certain circumstances pregnant employees are often just "around" and are not in a physical condition to contribute their usual work output. In some instances, this amounts to wages without any work being performed. The matter of pregnancy should be studied further. Pregnancy cannot be treated as a non-event, and a pregnant person should not automatically receive the usual work benefits.

In the matter of bereavement, the definition of what constitutes a family can be very widely interpreted, and certainly could be construed and used by many employees in such a way as to get a few days off unless clearly defined. With regard to job protection, during periods of sickness most firms can reinstate their employees with few problems. But with respect to small firms—and I am thinking of perhaps small credit unions, because presumably they come under this legislation—it will not always be easy to reinstate employees in offices of two or three people. There does not seem to be any tribunal to which a small firm can apply to see if it has the ability to meet specified conditions and whether meeting them would be too onerous.

Section 5(7) provides protection against unjust firing. That is of some concern, particularly to small businesses. In fact, most dismissals from small businesses are due to personality conflicts between the boss and the employee. In most cases, no amount of ordering by ministerial authority will resolve the problem. This is a very important matter. Because of possible unpleasant effects and difficult situations, this section must be seriously considered.