

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

administrations worried too much about the effects this would have. The experiences in municipalities and some of the provinces have not been nearly as bad as those which were expected. I can recall that in the 1940s, officials of the Province of Saskatchewan thought that it would be a horrible idea to give public servants and employees of the Legislature collective bargaining rights. They thought that anarchy would follow and Government would not be able to function.

I have often wondered what it would be like if we did not have any messengers, pages, security guards or waiters and waitresses around here for a couple of weeks. Perhaps it would be a good lesson for all of us in this Chamber and the other place as well as for the top administrators. Perhaps then we would find out in a difficult way what all of these things that we take for granted mean to us on a day-to-day basis. I am including in this the interpreters, the *Hansard* employees and others as well. Some of these employees are well paid but they are certainly not, by any stretch of the imagination, overpaid. They darn well earn their keep. There are some employees of the Parliament of Canada who, if they wished, could make more money somewhere else but they are dedicated, loyal and they like it here. That is no reason to take advantage of them.

I hope that the Government will be amenable to improvements in the legislation and that the legislation itself will be amendable. I hope that proves to be the case because there are some shortfalls in this legislation about which none of us should be proud or brag and which all of us should be anxious to correct.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments? Debate.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I too am happy to join in this debate. When looking back at the promises that were made by members of the Conservative Party when they were in opposition, I find that they made a fairly thorough representation of their perspective in response to some specific questions directed at them about their position on collective bargaining rights, staffing procedures and classification possibilities for the Public Service and in particular for employees on the Hill. I would like to refer specifically to some promises that were made and that were in fact tabled as a result of the commitments made by the Conservative Government. The Government stated for the record the following:

A PC government will negotiate directly with public service unions and associations toward the establishment of an improved collective bargaining system based on the provisions of the Canada Labour Code. Staffing procedures, classification, technological change, designations, and other issues will become negotiable. We will pursue joint bargaining as a means of achieving greater fairness and efficiency in the collective bargaining process. Our Party will seek advice from PIPS and other public service organizations as to how we can improve the many regulations governing the use of arbitration and conciliation so that disputes can be resolved quickly without disrupting government service to the public.

An element of today's debate which we have not had a chance to address in the House is the Canada Labour Relations Board decision which reversed its previous position by announcing today that it was going to issue certification orders for certain bargaining units on the Hill. I have just received a copy of the judgment in my office. I understand that certifica-

tion will be accorded to certain employees in the Library of Parliament, drivers, messengers and security services employees with others expected to follow.

It seems to me that what the Canada Labour Relations Board has done in announcing the reversal of its original position of June 28, 1985, in which it suspended proceedings for certification, is that it has in fact accorded to those hundreds and indeed over 1,000 employees of the Hill who have sought the right to certification the right to pursue that particular certification under the provisions of the Canada Labour Code. In that regard, this particular decision, a decision which in fact had been stalled for a number of months, sheds new light on the debate and on the Bill that is before us today. Quite clearly, in according the right to certification under the Canada Labour Code to a number of employees on the Hill, the Canada Labour Relations Board is saying that mechanisms that are currently in place can be utilized effectively for employees on the Hill. In that regard, it seems to me that it would further muddy the waters to follow up with Bill C-45 at a time when we know the Government has 20 days in which to respond to the decision of the Canada Labour Relations Board. You can believe me about this, Mr. Speaker, in light of the promises that were made by the Conservative Party and the promises that were issued to Public Service unions across the country. The Government said that staffing procedures, classification, technological change, designation and other issues will be negotiable. It is quite clear that the Government will have a chance to respond to the veracity of those statements within the 20-day period which has been allotted as a result of the Canada Labour Relations Board decision today.

• (1700)

I have had a chance to consult with a number of my colleagues on this issue, including representatives on the Hill who have worked hard to sign up members. At this point they have signed up more than 1,000 members, some of whom have been required to sign again and again and again indicating their interest in becoming part of a certified bargaining unit on Parliament Hill. It seems to me that while the Canada Labour Relations Board is awaiting summary action from the Government as to its good faith in adopting its recommendations it is futile for us to continue the debate at this time. I would argue, as have my colleagues, the Hon. Members for Glengarry-Pre-scott-Russell (Mr. Boudria), Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) and Hull-Aylmer (Mr. Isabelle), that there are a number of amendments to the legislation which is currently before the House which this Party would like to see. However, it seems to me that with the decision which has been announced today that at this point in time it is futile for us to continue discussion of the Bill when we are still awaiting the response of the Government to a potential certification under the Canada Labour Code. From the perspective of the organizers on the Hill who have been trying to get the Canada Labour Relations Board to come to grips with this issue for two years it was a surprise decision. I have had discussions today with representa-