

opportunities they have had over years and years of government they never once brought forward a piece of legislation themselves. Never once. The Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe was here for the four years when the Liberals were in office from 1980 to 1984. I do not remember him once rising to defend the rights of Parliament Hill employees to organize as a union, to bargain collectively. I do not remember it. I ask him if he can find it in the record, to put it back on the record now. When, between 1980 and 1984, did he ever rise in his place and demand of the Government that it afford to the employees of Parliament Hill the right to collective bargaining? I say frankly to my other colleague who is desperately bobbing up and down hoping to get the floor, that I do not remember his doing it either.

It is not whether individually the Liberal Members might say that if the Hill were organized their staff could join. What I want to know is this: is the Liberal caucus committed to collective bargaining for its employees? Is the Liberal caucus prepared to say to its employees without hesitation, without equivocation, that the Liberal Members would be very pleased if the staff were to join with other people on Parliament Hill and form a union to bargain collectively with us? Let me help you out, lest you cannot find the words, I know what they are, the word is no.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I always thought that questions and comments were for Members to ask of the person who was speaking, and not for the person who is speaking to be asking the questions. Maybe I am wrong. I am pretty sure that this is the way it was structured. Nevertheless, we will let it go.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I would only say to the Member that my employees are free to do as they wish. When he asks me whether I would let them know that it would please me greatly if they would all do a certain thing, I want to ask him, where does he find that model of democracy that says to employees, that I would be pleased if you would do a certain thing, therefore, I would be displeased if you do not do what I want you to do? That is the politburo, commissar type of relationship that one has with one's employees. I do not ever threaten my employees. I do not tell them I am pleased or displeased about decisions they take about their personal life. There are intelligent employees in my office, freely able to express themselves and to think for themselves.

Mr. Deans: I am certainly pleased to hear that. I can, therefore, assume that the answer to my question is no. On the one hand the Member is not prepared to indicate that he would be not displeased if his staff were to join a union, that he would be happy to deal with them. More important, since obviously a one-on-one thing is not going to be terribly satisfactory, is he prepared to tell me that the Liberal caucus meeting one Wednesday morning made a decision that it would find it acceptable if the workers decided to become part of a union?

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

• (2030)

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can put it into context. This Bill will pass soon and no one need worry about that.

When the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) asks a question about unionized employees, he is putting it to the wrong people when he asks the Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) or myself, the Member for Gander—Twillingate. Let me explain why. The employees in my colleague's office and my office would break every union agreement every day because they do not work eight hours a day, they work 12 and 14 hours, of their own volition. They do that because we deal with welfare cases, unemployment insurance cases and Canada Pension cases. The phone bills will prove that the member from the New Democratic Party is speaking to the wrong people when he asks: "Will you allow your employees—", of course we will allow our employees. Perhaps I should not say this, but I think we have the best employees on Parliament Hill.

The other point concerns criticizing a government Member. Today, a Progressive Conservative Member does his job in his caucus. That is why some people who occasionally watch the House of Commons unfairly judge a Conservative Member today when they ask that Member why he did not speak when a very topical subject came before the House. The chances are that nine times out of ten that Member was speaking in his caucus, or speaking behind the scenes to his Minister.

The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain is living in the past. It is like back to the future, he believes that the Government is behaving the same as the Liberals behaved—those free-wheeling spenders who created all those Crown corporations, threw money at problems, would not lay anyone off, and created employment. That is the difference. The Government is obsessed with the deficit. When the Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe and myself see lay-offs, we talk about them because we are concerned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) on a short rebuttal. I hope that people are watching this performance this evening so they can see how Parliament really lives and how it really works.

Mr. Deans: I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I do not often make gratuitous comments about the Chair. However, let me make two comments in answer to my colleague. I do not know why he is now sucking up to the Conservatives. Second, is he suggesting that because people work on welfare cases and unemployment insurance cases and work 12 hours a day, that they somehow ought not to belong to a union?

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I am simply suggesting that I am sure there is not one Member of Parliament who would refuse any such request from their employees. I am suggesting to the Hon. Member that one is not a very good union employee if one agrees to work an extra four hours a day for nothing.

Mr. Deans: Well, pay them overtime like I do.