

Let me emphasize at the outset that these ideas, notions or proposals have been generated as a result of my past experience and do not carry the cachet of approval of the party to which I belong. Even if they are still personal kites I am flying, they are kites that to my mind are very important ones, ones that deserve consideration in the days ahead and ought to be brought out now before a full consideration of this matter comes before this House.

In the first half of his budget address the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) provided me with the text for my comments today when he said, as reported at page 7026 of *Hansard* for June 23, and this was not from the "Book of Revelation", as I have just been reminded, but rather the minister was talking about the collective bargaining process:

An essential element is the legal right to strike in all but the most essential occupations. But the government is not prepared to grant increases that are unwarranted by any reasonable standard. This may lead to legal work stoppages. The resulting inconvenience to the public will have to be accepted.

I happen to think that comment, stated in that way, is something less than complimentary to the public service, suggesting for example that it is irresponsible and might engage in strike action at any moment, and something less than appropriate to say to the public at large. The minister is threatening the public by saying it will just have to put up with the way the government deals with its employees. This is not an appropriate form of speech for a Minister of Finance, either to the employees of the Canadian government or to the Canadian general public at large.

I say that to assume a degree of irresponsibility on the part of the public service does that service a great deal less than justice, and I say this basing my views on fairly lengthy experience in that service. The public service is a responsible service, and if parts of it feel called on to go on strike from time to time I think we should look for the causes of such action rather than deprecating the action itself.

What can those causes be and where are they to be found? As a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Employer-Employee Relations in the Public Service I have heard on many occasions from witnesses coming before us criticism of the government for its failure to bargain in good faith. This comment has been made so often, and it is on the record of our proceedings to it, I feel there has to be something in it. I feel there must be some way to remove the need to make such a comment because, in all frankness, it does no good to the bargaining process. It is to this that I intend to turn my attention this evening.

I am also led to look into this matter because I get the impression from my mail, comments I read in the press, and from remarks made to me by voters in my riding that the general public, which, and I would like to underline this right now, is in the final analysis the real employer of the public service, is thoroughly fed up with work stoppages and the denial of services for which it has paid, and which current negotiating procedures seem unable to eliminate entirely.

An employer does not like to be deprived of the services for which he pays, and I understand that perfectly, whether because the paymaster, in the form of the Treasury Board acting as the public's agent in this particular

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instance, is not offering enough, or whether it is because the unions are demanding too much. One way or the other, the public does not want to go on with this process in that manner.

In any event, does the public really know what causes the breakdown, the resultant strike and the withdrawal of services? I think the general public should be made aware of these causes, and as my address develops I propose to come to this matter.

It is against this general background that these ideas developed and are being put forward tonight for consideration, pending the legislation which I presume will have to emerge from the deliberations of the joint parliamentary committee. Before that we should have the ideas in the open and before us, to think about, to be weighed and evaluated between now and when the legislation is brought down, because perhaps out of these considerations will develop a more effective structure in which collective bargaining in the public service can take place to the advantage of all concerned, and that is my primary interest.

● (2020)

The government seems rather proud of having extended the right to strike to public servants. It is so proud of doing so that it is prepared to classify it, as we heard in the budget address, as part of the democratic process. To the extent that a channel of protest can be regarded as democratic I suppose I would have to agree, but I would hardly characterize all strikes and all strike action in that way. Be that as it may, I should like to see that right in the public sector replaced by more effective means, or by eliminating the need to strike.

What I should like to see enshrined in the bargaining procedures is an even more deeply entrenched element of the democratic process, namely, that fair, reasonable and just treatment be guaranteed to all concerned by all concerned, and here I mean the employees who provide the service, the government which distributes to the employees, in the form of wages and salaries, moneys obtained from the general public, and the third element, the general public, who in the final analysis is the consumer of those services and who pays for them, the ultimate employer in the final analysis who above all else must be satisfied.

Nobody likes strikes. All we have to do is find an effective means of rendering them unnecessary. Before turning to the proposals I have to put forward to that end, let me say that in my view the predecessor of this government made two conspicuous bungling errors in the initial stages of drawing up the legislation extending collective bargaining to the public service. I saw that at the time from the point of view of one who was inside the public service. I did not agree with it at that time. The first was the notion that the whole process of collective bargaining as it had grown up willy-nilly, with all its good points and its bad points in the private industrial sector, could be transferred in toto holus-bolus and substantially unmodified for application in the public sector.

Even the right to strike was transferred in this way. This right incidentally was one which Arnold Heeney, the Commissioner of the Public Service at that time, did not