

Government Orders

mediation some years ago when the Liberals were in power.

We are under a different set of circumstances and a different philosophy and, indeed, the right philosophy. It is called restraint. It is called deficit reduction and debt reduction. Our main goal is not to saddle our children and our grandchildren with the amount of deficit and debt that this country is now carrying. In order to do that, we have to act on every measure and every department.

As my colleague from Kitchener mentioned as well, every one of us in this House and every one of us working for the government is being subjected to the zero, three, three formula.

He mentioned something that was most interesting with regard to what he thought should come down the road in the future. Perhaps the right to strike that was given to the Public Service in 1967 should be removed and it should have binding arbitration.

• (1550)

I have to agree with him. I just wonder if he would comment on binding arbitration or the dispute settlement mechanism.

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question and the comments made. I think it is time that we look at this question of strikes in the Public Service. In my mind, they should all be gone. We should take them away.

We have to change the legislation of 1967. I wish provinces would also look at it, with regard to teachers—my background was a teacher—and as they have done for other things. With all public servants, whoever they are, none should have the right to strike. That is my view.

The reason I say that is because the disciplines that take place in the private sector do not apply in the public sector. We cannot compare the two. That is the reason why we need a different mechanism. There are constraints in the private sector in a strike. They fall equally on both workers and management. They have to work it out or they both lose.

Who is the constraint in a Public Service strike? No one. There is rarely competition. Who goes bankrupt? No one. It is loaded on the future or if you have some sense of responsibility, you tax them. No one says that in here. I have not heard opposition members against us

say: "We would like them to get more and we are prepared to say yes to higher taxes". No one has said that.

In other words, I think in response to the question, yes I would like us to revoke what we did in 1967. Take away the right to strike in the Public Service at both federal and provincial levels. Provinces would have to do that themselves, but we could take the leadership.

Then we bring in a system in which we know that a contract comes up to a certain date, then immediately an arbitration process kicks in, then immediately a conciliator process kicks in and if necessary, finally then a mediator closes and you must accept. I think we can do that. That is my response to the member.

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Madam Speaker, I wish it were as easy and as simple as the hon. member for Kitchener suggests. All we have to do is pass this legislation and there shall be harmony between government and its employees. I can think of many instances in which we would like to have that kind of a system. I can suggest places where they have tried to do it that way and those governments are now falling apart all over the world.

It is not that easy to say there shall be harmony. That is one of the things that worries me about the legislation we are considering right now.

It would seem to me that we are rushing toward a precipice. We are going to have a choice mighty soon of going over the edge or backing up. From the remarks I heard earlier today from the hon. House leader for the government, there seems to be some possibility that we will be backing up. I dearly hope that will be the case.

This legislation is doing something different. In spite of the remarks by the hon. member for Kitchener, and other speakers have said this in their own way, this legislation is different. It does not provide for any way of settling the arguments between the representatives of the employees and the employer. It simply says that the arguments shall cease and for a period of three years there shall be no bargaining rights. It wipes out all of those rights for three years.

As I said earlier, that has been tried in other countries and those countries are falling apart. In my father's native land of Croatia, look what is happening there where there was a decree that there shall be harmony