

Adjournment Motion

This approach, which I have reason to believe finds general favour with the minister, seems to me to be of great importance, particularly because of the economic climate in which we now find ourselves. Labour and management are being put under increasing pressures to protect not only their respective positions of trust vis-à-vis their own organizations, but jointly to protect the public interest at a time when inflation and unemployment are both rampant.

Certainly the minister is aware of the problem, although in fairness one must point out that neither he nor the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) would concede there was anything wrong with the economy or with anything else during last summer's election campaign. This was a striking example, Madam Speaker, of one of the best documented cases of selective amnesia the country has ever seen.

Last fall when questioned before the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration, in answer to a question by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), concerning the government's approach to this sort of problem, and by that I mean the problem of labour-management conflicts, the public interest and comparative wage scales, the Minister said:

To try, in a contemporaneous fashion, to say what is a reasonable and just allocation of the national distribution of income, to all the various levels, and not just the labour movement which negotiates in public. This is all the people who give themselves increases in private. It is to see if we cannot come up with some objective standards, criteria that are just and do not try to visit the inflationary process unevenly on one segment.

I suggest this is a constructive approach, although one must not forget the priority of trying to control inflation. The minister is not unfamiliar with the following proposition, that there are a number of difficulties in labour relations, with current bargaining structures and, indeed, attitudes, and he believes that these can be improved.

However, they cannot be improved by government imposing solutions on labour or management. The improvements must come through a joint process of decision making which the parties see as being realistic and acceptable to themselves, with the role of government being to ensure that they are pushed to find better solutions to the problems we face.

Some of the problems are of a structural nature in that there are many bargaining points, many bargaining agents and many unions. The result, as any holiday traveller in Canada knows, is something as exciting as the Olympic lottery. As he embarks on his holiday, confident that the airline pilots are working and that the machinists are also on the job, there just may happen to be a walkout of ticket clerks and other personnel.

Even if all these private sector employees are on the job the trip could still be placed in jeopardy by collective action taken by air traffic controllers, technicians, airport electricians or firefighters. There are similar difficulties in the movement of grain, with the risk of its steady flow being halted if in the long stream handling of the commodity there is labour peace on the dockside but not on the ships or on the waterways.

It is clear that the system today lacks coherence and has a great potential for conflict. I believe that in summarizing approaches here the minister has some sympathy with and

[Mr. MacKay.]

certainly is also aware that there is a willingness, which is shared by both labour and management, to participate more fully in discussions of how our national product will be divided.

Management is more confident of its place in association with government; labour is much less sure of itself. But it is believed that the potential is there and that labour wants to be a social partner, and that there are enormous reservoirs of goodwill which can be mobilized.

It has been suggested that a Canada labour relations council can be a mechanism that could go beyond one shot consultation, and that the government's objectives for the council could be an alteration of bargaining structures so as to reduce the number of bargaining points.

In assessing this particular objective I would hope that the minister would keep in mind that in some western industrialized nations the state has a greater role than in Canada in assisting labour and management with the administration and provision of fringe benefits so that the parties can stick to the basic question of what is a fair wage.

Other objectives of the council, which I believe the minister favours, are the utilization of structures for ongoing relationships; to persuade the parties to adopt alternative modes of settlement of disputes so as to lessen impact of conflict on others if not on themselves; and to ascertain what additional programs and services we should be providing in the way of support.

Some of these concepts that the minister proposed are sound objectives, but these sound objectives must be initially premised on one very basic and fundamental point, namely, that the establishment of the council he proposes be left in the hands of the parties which will be its constituent members. By this I mean that the trade union movement be left to appoint its own members to the council and to remove them if it sees fit, and that the same right be enjoyed by management. If this is not done then the council will be a puppet body to which government appointees are named, in all probability not necessarily reflecting the proper views of those they purport to represent.

Consideration must also be given to the fact that organized labour represents only about one-third of the labour force of this country, and the interests of this comparatively unorganized group must be kept in mind to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, the hon. member opposite suffers somewhat from amnesia, and is selective indeed. He remembers the issues in the election campaign very well, but he conveniently forgets the results on July 8 and the endorsement of the Canadian people of the government and its policies.

As the minister said on Friday last, as recorded on page 3017 of *Hansard*, I take it that the hon. member is making a representation that the minister should ask his colleagues to approve the creation of a body to be designated the Canada labour relations council. It is obviously no longer a secret that the minister has already taken this initiative.