

disrupt its proceedings or to detain its Members. For any legislation to be framed in that sort of context today is clearly ridiculous.

Beauchesne also has a definition of privilege for the conduct of public business and the procedure of the House generally including the acts of the Speaker himself in the chair. Neither the Government nor any authority has the power to deal with the staff of the House of Commons unless specially authorized to do so by statute or resolution of the House. That, of course, is why the existing legislation governing labour relations in the Public Service cannot apply.

However, this surely does not relieve Parliamentarians of the responsibility for framing legislation which reflects contemporary society in Canada, the legitimate aspirations of organized workers and the essential sense of justice and fairness which most Canadians feel. It is not as if an adventurous step was required, because we know that even in 1981 the Parliaments of the United Kingdom, Australia, Ontario and Quebec all recognized the rights of employees in those Parliaments and all afforded collective bargaining rights on the same basis as the provincial Public Service. It is also noted that in fact in Australia, Parliament was the subject of strike action. That Parliament as an institution did not find itself severely diminished by such action. The dispute was indeed regulated in the normal course of events.

Our opposition to Bill C-45 is based on its failure to provide those collective bargaining rights. I would like to list a couple for the benefit of people who do have collective bargaining agreements which are full, fair and unfettered so they may know what exactly is being denied the staff of the House of Parliament.

Public Service employees can, for example, appeal staffing decisions such as appointments or demotions to an independent third party. This right to appeal will be denied under Bill C-45. Bill C-45 eliminates any recourse to the rights available under the Canada Labour Code without providing any corresponding appeal or rights mechanisms. We should have an attitude of *noblesse oblige* to the employees of Parliament Hill.

While there has been considerable documentation of abuses, it would appear that they have been ignored in a framing of the legislation.

[Translation]

As is clear from a paper submitted by the PSAC, many employees have no job description, and those who do have found that they are obsolete and are often arbitrarily changed, especially in an environment that has recently been subject to considerable re-organization and technological change.

Mr. Speaker, I may add that the technological change will continue. And I would like to conclude by quoting the former President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Mr. Pierre Samson, who said:

There is no reason why parliamentary employees should be considered as second class citizens—

And the New Democratic Party, supports this position.

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my views to those expressed by Hon. Members who have already taken part in the debate on Bill C-45, a Bill that on the face of it would seem to benefit the employees of the House. It is certainly better than nothing because we have employees here at this very moment who are not unionized and who have very little in the way of protection, and I must admit that this legislation is at least a step in the right direction.

However, as soon as we scratch the surface and look at what Bill C-45 really offers, we realize that the legislation is unsatisfactory. However, it does provide a basis, and I would not go so far as to say that the Bill should be rejected out of hand. It still provides a basis for discussion, so there is a possibility of improving the Bill in Committee, provided the improvements are substantial.

Actually, I think this is a Bill that is meant to make the Government and Government Members feel good. Now they can say: We don't intend to leave those poor House employees defenceless; now we have a Bill that will help them organize and unionize and defend their rights.

What I find very strange indeed is that when these employees of the House of Commons had received the permission of the Canada Labour Relations Board to organize with a view to forming a union, the Government decided to appeal the decision and go before the courts to have it reversed.

My own explanation for this behaviour is that if the employees had organized on the basis of the initial decision, they would have organized in a way that would be more in line with their own demands. The Government, however, preferred to cut short any such action by its employees and introduce a Bill to deal with the situation according to its own lights. I think this legislation does more for the Government than for its employees. Any legislation that allows employees to unionize should provide a fair balance. In other words, the employees must have sufficient protection. On the other hand, the employer must be able to manage the enterprise. In this case, however, and I shall give some details later on, the employees are not being given enough power to look after their own interests. I would say this is a Bill that cries out for improvement. I am rather surprised that several back-benchers representing ridings close to Parliament Hill on the Hull side, in Gatineau and in Ottawa seem to be taking so little interest in this Bill. One would expect them to spring to the defence of some of the House of Commons employees who happen to be their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House for some time now, 17 years in fact, and I can tell you that discontent among House of Commons employees is proverbial. Not that there is a general outcry, but a Member of the House cannot walk in the corridors or cafeterias for more than a week without coming across an employee who has a grievance. They will even corner Members from distant ridings such as mine in the Montreal region. None of my electors work on Parliament Hill, yet employees come