

*Labour Relations*

As I say, this is partly the reason for labour trouble today, a failure by labour and management to communicate with each other on a man to man basis.

I realize another hon. member wishes to speak, Madam Speaker, so I shall conclude on this note. In this great country of ours we must realize that we have so much going for us. Our country is strong and proud, and this fact alone will make us even stronger. No country became great without facing many problems. We are one of the few countries of the world that got our flag from parliament; many others had to bleed for it. I say to the members of this House, thank God that we only have postal and other labour problems in this country today, and have not had to shed blood in order to stand under our flag.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Madam Speaker, I am quite pleased to take part in this debate launched by my colleague for Kamouraska (Mr. Dionne) who is a distinguished unionist well sensitized to the problems of workers who are now facing troubled times not only in Quebec but throughout Canada.

Needless to add, Madam Speaker, in the short time allowed to me that more than 3,351,390 man-days on average have been lost each year between 1960 and 1970 as a result of various strikes. Needless to add either that in several cases, the strike is not only legal but often justified, that is the workers have the right to strike and they are urged to do so. One only has to think, for example, of a strike which is now affecting my constituents in the furniture industry where, after 27 years of employment in the same dusty plant, even though they are practically artists, some cabinet makers or furniture finishers still earn \$2.60 per hour, which is the new minimum wage in Quebec.

● (2150)

Generally speaking, one can say that in most cases, workers are peaceful people who want to better their lot, who do not want to break anything nor restrict the rights of others in our society. Unfortunately, these people are manipulated, lead by union leaders, who often abuse their power, their prestige, their title, compel workers by restricting their freedom and leading them to actions that everyone regrets in the end.

I do not refer necessarily to acts of violence, since these are exceptional. But when a strike has lasted two, three or four months in some sectors, how long will it take for the workers who were to be given help through the strike, because the strike weapon has been invented to defend the workers' rights in extreme circumstances, how long will it be before they return to normal conditions? Finally, the strike is not a peaceful means. It is an extreme means, once all other avenues have been unsuccessfully explored.

As my colleague from Kamouraska (Mr. Dionne) very rightly said, today, under the influence of union leaders, workers go on strike first and then, having demonstrated their strength, they go on to bargaining. While logic and common sense dictate that everything possible must be done to negotiate, if that does not succeed, legal mechanisms provide this extreme solution, the strike. Why do I say it is extreme? Because rarely does the worker, what-

[Mr. Condon.]

ever increase he gained through this pressure action, recoup the amounts he lost during the strike.

That shows, Madam Speaker, that the main problem facing our society is not necessarily the strike mechanism, but rather the bargaining process that is defective. Indeed, everyone can strike in any circumstances. Today we have rotating, legal, wildcat, vertical, horizontal and all kinds of strikes. But what we fail to develop is our bargaining process which must precede any collective or common action called a strike. That is why my colleagues and I are for the right to strike. Because association is a human right, we cannot in any event deny that right derived from the right to associate and which is the counterpart of that of the employer. The motion we proposed today seeks especially to improve the bargaining process since it is at that exact level that the main problem lies.

For instance, to say that after two or four months negotiations have still not been held between employer and employee is ridiculous and the worker is always the victim. On a limited striking fund, he goes on strike and there are no negotiations. Finally, Madam Speaker, even this last resort means of protecting the worker's right works against him because he must bear the financial consequences. If we add abuse to that situation, on the one hand from union leaders who generally are associated with politicians—and here I have in mind the Parliament of Quebec which uses such gimmicks that there is no longer any form of union freedom—then the problem takes extreme proportions. Anyway, Madam Speaker, those union leaders who abuse their influence, call for violence, and rebellion against those in power are finally exploiting workers to create an unofficial government and challenge the very real strength of democracy invested in the duly elected representatives, so that we wake up in a state of permanent turmoil, of constant distrust, and God knows where we will end up. When faced with such situations of extreme abuses, Parliaments—and this one is no exception—are forced to step in often in turn in an extreme and abusive way, supposedly under the legitimate pretext of preserving the common interest. That is why this Parliament, including myself, has adopted special legislation to settle so-called exceptional situations. All of this, because the parties involved probably refused to bargain in respect, honesty, good will and good faith. This, however, as suggested by my colleague the hon. member for Kamouraska (Mr. Dionne), is probably due to the fact that our labour legislation, including our Canadian Labour Code, is outdated.

Madam Speaker, as this debate is coming to an end, I take the liberty of asking this question. Why are all Canadians and hon. members so anxious to streamline our democratic institutions, improve the financing of political parties, modernize and adapt all our legislation? There is no exception to this rule, whether it be in the fields of communications, culture, economy, finance, income tax—hon. members will readily remember the thorough tax reform that was adopted by the House.

Yet, for more than 25 years, only one area has not been updated, has not been improved, has not been adapted, and it is our Canadian Labour Code. It is the only area we are not really looking into in order to adapt our negotiation