

Judges Act

that this is unfair. The minister is being grossly unfair to Newfoundland.

Let me tell the House about one case I know of concerning the premier of the province. He launched a libel action against an individual and television station in the province. The case has gone to appeal on a point of law and the Premier of Newfoundland has been waiting since March, 1974, for a judgment. Of course, he will not obtain the judgment until the minister appoints a successor judge to fill the existing vacancy.

I am not a member of the bar, but I suggest to the minister that the administration of justice is the responsibility of all members of this House. I further say that justice delayed is justice denied, and justice is being denied to the people of Newfoundland because there are delays in the hearing of appeals and in the handing down of judgments.

I submit the minister has an obligation to tell at least the Newfoundland members of this House when he will fill this vacancy. I hope we will hear an undertaking from the minister before this bill is passed. I, for one, intend to press him for such an undertaking before we allow this bill to leave committee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It seems that the House is ready for the question. Mr. Speaker, who is to consider the amendment moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), who has not returned to the House.

Mr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, perhaps since Mr. Speaker has not yet returned with his decision and the present debate seems to have concluded, we could hear the opening speech on the next item of business. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) is in the House. Perhaps if he has finished speaking and Mr. Speaker comes back, we could interrupt the proceedings, hear his decision, and conclude consideration of the present item of business.

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, may I make a few comments on this bill which is to affect the reorganization of the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island. I understand that the proposal in this bill which applies to Prince Edward Island meets with the general approval of the law society and legal profession of my province. The arrangement contemplated will be an improvement because, as I understand it, it is an effort to spread the work load between judges of the provincial supreme court and judges of the county court. The net effect will be that the total number of judges in Prince Edward Island will stay the same, but they will all sit in one court, which is an improvement over the present arrangement.

At present there is a vacancy in Prince Edward Island. We need an additional judge. Although the existing vacancy is in the county court, I hope once this bill passes that the effect will be that the provincial supreme court will be immediately brought up to full strength and that we shall see no more vacancies left unfilled for a long time. I presume that the judges now sitting in the county court will be transferred to the newly constituted supreme court, but I have no assurance that that is the case. If it is,

some of our judges will be placed in a higher position than they now occupy and, as well, they will feel the benefit of the increase in their general rates of pay.

I hope the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) will act promptly to fill the vacancy which exists in our county court, and which will exist in the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island once this bill passes.

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to speak on this bill. However, having been here since 1972, I cannot help observing that there seems to be some difference in the way this parliament sets about determining wages. For example, I saw how this House settled the recent railroad strike. I saw the kind of settlement that was meted out to our working class people, so that our railroad workers would go back on the rails in what was called an essential service. I heard members on the government and on the Conservative sides say that parliament is not a bargaining group, that we do not bargain, do not negotiate, and that we have to get workers back to work, period. I saw the niggardly amounts handed out in order to get the workers back on the job. I saw how much was awarded when we legislated them back to the rails. I think we gave them something like 12 per cent, and we considered ourselves pretty generous in awarding them that much. We wanted them to go back to work in an essential service.

I have also seen how the members of parliament deal with their own wages. There was certainly nothing niggardly about the way they dealt with their own wages.

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We again see this parliament setting a wage for an elitist group in the Canadian society. I should say to my friends that with the number of lawyers in this House there may be some kind of conflict of interest. They are setting the wages so that when they are defeated in the House, they can get appointed to the Bench. There seems to be a bit of featherbedding. When we deal with our own kind, we are pretty generous. There is suddenly no talk about restraint or wage freezes. During the last election the Conservatives ran around the country talking about wage freezes.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question. One of the most intellectual governments of all time, and no doubt it is intellectual, allegedly anyway, is the government of British Columbia. I would like to ask the hon. member how much it increased salaries for the members of the legislature and for what we called magistrates and it now calls provincial judges? The provincial judges under the government of British Columbia are the highest paid in Canada. They make more money than some of the judges the hon. member is talking about.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rodriguez: I do not belong to the provincial legislature of British Columbia.

Mr. Lawrence: Too bad.