

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

structure. Let them sign a voluntary collective agreement such as we have for years accepted as the right of our employees in the NDP. Put your money where your mouth is. Well, maybe you do not have that much but do the best you can.

Mr. Blaikie: Money, that is.

Mr. Deans: Try to show by example, not by rhetoric. Idle rhetoric is available here on a daily basis from every side of the House.

Mr. Tobin: We can hear it now.

Mr. Deans: Put your money where your mouth is. Demonstrate by example that the Liberal caucus believes in the collective bargaining process. Invite representatives of the group who represents our employees to come in and sign up your employees, organize them into a unit and bargain on their behalf. Provide them with benefits, and let us together prove to the Government, albeit with difficulty, I do not deny, that collective bargaining can work for employees of Members of Parliament. Demonstrate by example that it can be done, notwithstanding the classification or category that an employee falls into.

There is the challenge. I say to my friend from Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe, if his colleague from Montreal—Sainte-Marie or his colleague from Gander—Twillingate do not want to join with him, that is a different matter altogether. I suppose they will have to answer to their own constituents for that. Here we have the three of them, a wonderful group no doubt. Let me ask them a question: are you individually prepared to allow your staff to join in a collective bargaining arrangement? Will you allow them to join with our staff and become part of a union and bargain collectively with you? Are you prepared to do that? Are you prepared to stand up and say tonight that your staff is free to join a collective bargaining arrangement with an agent on your behalf? If so, I will make sure that the union representative is in your office in the morning.

● (2020)

Beyond that I want them to explain to me why it was that over all these years, this good labour-type group, so-called, the Liberal Party, did not bring forward any legislation like this, or even, let me say, legislation that would have allowed members of that caucus and all of the employees on Parliament Hill to have a collective bargaining agreement. I would like to hear the answers to those questions. I have taken enough time other than to say I very much appreciate the opportunity, as you know, and since I rise infrequently I thought it a good idea that I should put on the record my frustration with some of the members of the caucus from the Liberal Party who have just spoken.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, let me say to the Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) who has just spoken that I have enjoyed his comments tremendously, not because they were necessarily accurate or particularly informative, but they

were entertaining in the normal course of events as they are whenever the Member gets to his feet.

Let us examine what he said. What the Member said in addressing his remarks to the Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe, who so humbly stands upon his feet in this House, is that the legislation is not adequate. He said the Member is absolutely correct when he points out the inadequacies in the legislation. He said the Member is absolutely correct in pointing out some of the problems from which his constituents are suffering. That is what the Member said.

That is the substance of his remarks. All the rest of his remarks were remarks that were borne out of frustration that I, as the Member from Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe, stood behind the Member for Gander—Twillingate, who is a Liberal Member, and when I saw that no other Member would stand to defend the interests of Hill employees, because no NDP Member was going to stand, because no Conservative Member was going to stand, I stood.

In examining what the Member said I find that it was not that he disagreed with my analysis of the Bill, in fact he said it was absolutely correct. What he was saying was that he was unhappy that two Liberals in a row rose to speak, because no other Member stood, and that was more than he could bear. Two Liberals stood to defend the basic and fundamental collective bargaining rights of any employee and, more particularly, those employees who serve Members of Parliament.

What the Member was really venting was not disagreement with my analysis but, rather some discomfort that the Liberal Party has had to fill here tonight the role of defender of those employees who could find no other voice in Parliament because no other Member but myself would stand behind the Member for Gander—Twillingate to contribute to this debate.

Having said that, let me say to the Member that my employees are free in my office, because I do not regard them as my employees. I regard them as employees who serve the people of Canada, primarily my constituency, but all the people of Canada are free to associate with whom they want. That is understood in the office that I work in.

The second thing I want to say to the Member is that as a Member of Parliament who takes seriously this reform that is supposed to imbue this place, let us find our conscience and our tongue to speak our minds. I have never failed to stand and to speak my mind notwithstanding history, the present or the future. If the Member finds that offensive, then offend I shall on many occasions.

Mr. Deans: It will be interesting to see my colleagues speak of history as it affects the future, I am not sure how he does that. My upset was not with the fact that he said things that might make sense, he always says things that make sense, I never denied it. What I find strange is that after half a century of Liberal Government the Liberal Members rise and expect us to believe that somehow or other they do not like the legislation because it does not go far enough, when after all the