

I would like to quote from the President of the PSAC local on Parliament Hill. Jacques Audette stated quite clearly, and I quote:

The issues of greatest concern were, and continue to be, classification, job descriptions, competitions, promotions, transfers and fear of lay-off or dismissal. These have always been totally up to the discretion of management and there have been serious abuses such as the recent problems with the pension plan, forced overtime hours and the payment of overtime on a bi-annual basis. Many of us are improperly classified and often do not have any job descriptions. Many of us have applied for promotions and transfers only to have the rules governing competitions change arbitrarily.

There has to be a wholesale housecleaning of staff relations here on Parliament Hill. It has to start with agreement between the employers and employees with respect to the legislation which will dominate their lives. To demonstrate I will cite some of the cases before us which cry out for this kind of agreed legislation to exist instead of this imposed legislation represented by Bill C-45.

There is the case of an older female employee with close to 20 years seniority who injured her back. She was off on long-term disability for a couple of months. Upon returning she was assigned duties which include heavy lifting and carrying although her old position still exists. She is told she should apply for early retirement if she is not pleased. Her internal grievance is denied. That is not the way we should treat older workers in our service.

There is the case of employees in a technical service here on the Hill who are required to attend training courses on their days off and on weekends, without pay. When these employees protested they were told it was mandatory and they had no choice. That is something they must be able to bargain about. We have to set up legislation which permits that, which does not rule it out of court.

I will relate the last case of many which I could present. In the cafeteria service an employee cut his hand on the job. He was told to visit the nurse. The nurse told him it was not safe to work and that he should go home. However, the manager informed the employee that he should go back to work or face discipline.

● (1250)

We cannot live in the feudal ages in the Houses of Parliament which are supposed to lead the country. We must have legislation which escapes the Dark Ages. Bill C-45 does not do that. It does not give workers the rights they deserve. For that reason the House must either massively, and in detail, amend the legislation, or we must reject it when it comes to a final vote. At second reading stage, since the choice of amendment is not available to us, we say it has to be rejected in order to take us out of the feudal age. This must be done to give fairness to employees in this, the key institution in our country, which should be a model employer instead of one which reeks of the Dark Ages still.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps).

Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act

Mr. Murphy: Ask a decent question.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I have been asked to ask a decent question. I want to tell the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy) that I hope I always ask decent questions. This is a decent question. Given that we have been debating the 30-day hoist amendment and the main motion for a couple of days now since the court judgment was handed down, does the Hon. Member not find it passing strange that we have not heard from any Government Members with respect to their position on this issue?

Mrs. Maily: That is not true.

Ms. Copps: The Hon. Member for Gatineau (Mrs. Maily) says that is not true. She obviously did not listen to my question. I asked why members of the Government have remained strangely silent with respect to my amendment for a 30-day hoist. This amendment simply asks for 30 days in which to look at the results of the court judgment. Since the court judgment was rendered, not one single Conservative in the House has opened his or her mouth. That is true. I find it somewhat strange.

By way of question to the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon), perhaps we could smoke out some of the silent members of the Government who have sat on the sidelines and who are prepared to allow the Government to take the employees to court as a result of the Canada Labour Relations Board decision. The Government is not prepared to waive the right to go to court. It took the employees to court and now that the decision has been rendered against the employees not one member of the Government has opened his or her mouth.

Mr. Oostrom: And they should not.

Ms. Copps: The Hon. Member says that they should not. What are we here for if they should not?

Mr. Oostrom: You do not comment on something which is before the courts.

Ms. Copps: The Hon. Member obviously does not understand the principle of *sub judice* which applies to criminal and civil proceedings of which this is neither. First, the court judgment has already been rendered. Second, all we are asking for is a 30-day delay so that we can have a chance to consider the court decision as it relates to Government employees. The Hon. Member for Gatineau—in fact, all members of the Government who represent the Ottawa area—have sat on their hands and have said absolutely nothing with respect to this matter. Does the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor feel that that is the normal course of events for Conservative backbenchers to follow?

Mrs. Maily: This Bill will do more for employees than all your rhetoric.