

cent chose arbitration and a whopping 64 per cent chose conciliation/strike.

I think we are sitting on a time bomb. In Canada we have developed an increasing potential for difficulty on the public side. That potential for difficulty and the probability of it occurring will not disappear because we suddenly decide, by a stroke of the pen, to remove the right to strike in the public service. As I said, the blame can be shared. It can be shared by the unions and their leadership in some respects. It can be shared by the Treasury Board and it can be shared by the government.

One reason we have opted on the public side for conciliation/strike rather than arbitration is because the conciliation/strike route for the employee and his union is more attractive to what the employee wants. He wants certainty and swiftness of decision. We have made it more attractive because arbitration has not developed as something which has been trusted, at least on the public service side.

It is too bad we have been driven to the situation where public service unions, which generally do not move in the direction of strike, are adopting the method which can end in strike. We must devise ways in this country of making the binding arbitration route more attractive.

I represent thousands of public servants and their families. I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, that they do not want a strike; they do not want disrupted services. They are no different from you or me for that matter. Like everyone else, they would like to have the opportunity to work steadily and to be paid in the ordinary course, to receive their mail regularly and be able to plan a holiday, using the rail and air services of the country confident that their holiday will take place. They suffer as much as anyone when a segment of the public service decides to withhold its work and labour. Based on those statistics arbitration in Canada is still being viewed less and less as a trusted tool or method of solving disputes. In view of the statements by the minister, in view of what has occurred in the past, in view of the potential for difficulty in the figures which I have mentioned earlier, we must take a look at the situation in the public service. My constituents who are in the public service do not hesitate to speak to me. They tell me quite frankly that they are not interested in strikes or in striking, and that if there is a demonstrably better way, they would rather have their disputes settled in that manner than through the withdrawal of services.

The public interest disputes commission which we have suggested, and which we will continue to suggest, is one of the cogs in the wheel of that better way. The management committees discussed by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) is another of those ways. Public servants tell me in equally strong terms that there is a suspicion abroad about the arbitration process as it now functions in the public service. To put their views succinctly, Mr. Speaker, they tell me that the scope of arbitration is far too narrow. It is impossible for them to arbitrate what they can negotiate.

By choosing the conciliation strike route, subject to very few exceptions, the whole range of differences and opinions be-

tween employers and employees can be aired. They say there are delays in the process which cause frustration. It is a fact that the hopes and the fears of many ride on the outcome of a particular case, and as frustrations develop, anger builds up. They suspect that the arbitration process, as it is now practised, is not completely free of or independent from the influences of the government of the day. They feel the arbitration tribunal ought to give reasons for its judgment in many areas, which it does not do, certainly on questions with respect to pay. They do not feel the arbitration boards are particularly responsible, because unlike the conciliation process they do not have the opportunity to nominate members to the board in the same way, nor is the arbitration board necessarily composed of the most appropriate people from the point of view of the expertise appropriate to the dispute. They do not have a say in the choice of chairman through their representatives, as they would have on a conciliation board. Perhaps most importantly, the entire process is dependent upon data in which the employees have less than full confidence.

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Those are only some of the reasons given to me from time to time by constituents who are interested in working and becoming involved in the public service, who do not want service withheld and want to live within a reasonable process. If those areas are the problems, nothing is insurmountable and I do not think we can ignore them. I do not think we can afford to set them aside with a simplistic sweep of the hand because we may face an immediate situation. Whether this bill is passed or not, the same atmosphere and demoralizing influences will be there. The same alarming statistics, with their potential for trouble, will be there for us to face, even though by this bill we may not have to face them in a general election.

No one in this House would condone law breaking in the public service or elsewhere. There is no one in this House who cannot feel somewhat sad that the situation in an essential service has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that now the government deems it necessary, whether for its own purposes or not, to defer the dispute for a time, rather than resolve it.

We must work on methods of improving the dispute resolution process. I know the Minister of Labour is not proud of the fact that this bill does not do that. Surely our best efforts in the next while have to be directed toward asking the public service and other labour-oriented groups and unions in the country to choose a form of dispute resolution which is not disruptive. That is the constructive way to go. When the dust settles from this piece of legislation and those issues, that problem is still before us waiting to be tackled.

I do not propose to speak any longer on the bill. The hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) indicated what our position would be with respect to the bill. It is appropriate for the debate to end quickly. It is important to resolve that question in the House tonight so that we can go on with other things and deal with them very quickly indeed.