

cial impact on the competitiveness of Canadian industry and the prosperity of Canadian workers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the committee who worked in a very harmonious way. With the support of members of the House and the other place I hope we can get this legislation into place very soon.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill. As the minister has said, in large measure it is the result of good consultation among the government, the employers and the unions representing employees in the federal sector.

As far as it goes in that direction it is an example of the importance of good management-labour relations, both in the interest of Canada remaining competitive, having a stable work environment and being able to deliver on its commitments internationally, and in the interest of what the government likes to call a partnership relationship between employers and employees that leads to more productive and more efficient work places. The government seems to understand this intellectually but continues to have a problem with fully committing to implementing the development of better management-labour relationships in Canada.

• (1210)

As they get down to the wire on actually doing something positive in this area, the devil inside that says all labour unions are bad seems to get in the way. It causes them to do that bit extra that again creates an atmosphere of confrontation and undermines the progress that has been made toward more productive partnerships.

Let me make it clear what I am speaking about. The bill contains two essential elements. As the minister has said, one is provisions that were negotiated and were the subject of lengthy discussions and very productive consultations between employee representatives and employer representatives in the federally regulated sector.

These are the provisions that relate to conditions of work, occupational health and safety issues relating to pregnant or nursing women, to employees who have become injured or disabled, parental leave and so on. Where the partnership model was followed and the

consultation was carried through there was consensus, agreement and a large measure of support for the bill.

Regrettably the government found it necessary to abandon that consultative process entirely and introduce an entirely new element into the bill before bringing it into the House, that is the provision of a forced vote among the membership of the union on a last offer. I do not know why the government chose to undermine the consultative process, the very positive atmosphere that had developed among government, labour, management and employers on this issue, by dropping this element into the bill at the last minute. Nonetheless it did.

It is on the basis of the negative effect we think the provision will have on the continued development of a positive climate of management-labour-government relationships that we will be voting against the bill.

Let me go back to the first package of amendments that we certainly support. The fact they have wide support is a tribute to the consultative process and to all those who participated in it. It provides for work place redeployment of women who are pregnant or nursing in the interest of their health and the health of either their born or unborn child. It also provides similar measures for workers injured or disabled as a result of their employment.

The positive result is the likelihood of keeping workers employed, adapting the work place so that they can continue to be employed and self-sufficient, rather than take advantage of various disability programs that are seldom satisfactory to either party.

We entirely support these provisions. We entirely support the greater flexibility of parental leave. If we want to keep a productive skilled work force, we know that increasingly the work place, public sector or private sector has to make accommodation for a better balance among personal, family and work responsibilities.

However we fail to understand why the government does not recognize that those are equally valuable provisions for approximately one-third of the 700,000 federally regulated employees it talked about, the third who are employees of the government, the Public Service of Canada.

• (1215)

We fail to understand why the government would not have accepted an amendment put forward by Liberal