itself as to who is crucial and who is not. There are usually in scope and out of scope employees designated in the contract.

• (1800)

The question of whether or not I would cross a picket line would depend really on whether the legislation we are dealing with is of a very serious and necessary nature, and on the kind of picketing that is going on. A lot of the picketing on the Hill, I foresee, will not be of a particularly crucial nature to the functioning of this House and this Chamber. When it is a question of serving my constituents and there is no other way of doing that but by being in the House, then I suppose I would have no choice but to cross the picket line. I would attempt to explain my reason to the picketers. I am sure that once they understood the reason, they would agree that the parliamentary function is also necessary. I have had this happen on a number of occasions and usually such picketers are quite in accord with what you are doing once they understand why you are doing it.

Mr. Gauthier: I appreciate the Hon. Member's comments and point of view because I know how seriously he feels about the subject.

Picket lines, as I understand, were originally organized for information purposes. They were originally thought up to inform the public that there was a conflict between the employee and the employers, between the democratic process and sometimes the aristocratic owners of an enterprise. Since information was the original intent of the picket line—and we know that today strikes and picket lines receive coverage—I am rather pleased to hear the Hon. Member's position that he would indeed cross the picket line if he felt that the business of the House required his presence. That is a serious position and one which I respect, although one I do not necessarily share.

Is the Hon. Member telling us he would assess his position according to the legislation before the House, or would he, rather, assess his position as that of a servant of the Canadian public, an elected representative who has an obligation to sit in the House and represent the people of Humbolt—Lake Centre?

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, I think I tried to make it fairly clear in my first answer that both would be at work. The legislation which is before the House rarely, but sometimes, does affect my constituents very clearly. On those occasions I would feel it would be my responsibility and, indeed, my duty to be in the House looking after them.

I will reiterate something I said in my speech. It is not very often that this House has that kind of crucial legislation before it. I refer again to the 15 days when we listened to the bells and nothing fell apart. However, there are occasions when the country may be on the verge of war or something like that and I think it would be necessary to explain why I had to cross the picket line, and I would do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments has now terminated.

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-45, an Act to provide employees of the House of Commons and Senate with a framework of representation, is proving controversial in its present form. Both the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the National Association of Broadast Employees and Technicians are finding considerable difficulty with this proposal. We must consider that this Bill will enshrine in law an employee-employer relationship which does not meet with the employees' approval.

With the advances workers on the Hill have made using the Canada Labour Relations Board, many see Bill C-45 as at best redundant and at worst a step backward for their rights. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) has stated to employee representatives that the Government is willing to give parliamentary employees the same rights enjoyed by federal public servants. However, the legislation before us does not include one particular right enjoyed by federal public servants, and that is, the right to strike. We might all consider that there are good reasons why employees on the Hill should not have the right to strike. But if that tool is removed from them, surely they must be compensated by having an extremely effective, strong and binding arbitration procedure in its place. That is not offered by Bill C-45.

I understand that there is a court decision pending. I really wonder about the advisability of proceeding with this Bill until that decision has been reached. I understand that the decision is likely to come down in a few days. The history is that on November 4, 1985, the Canada Labour Relations Board announced its decision to certify four bargaining units in the House of Commons and the Library of Parliament. I believe that since that time an additional unit has been certified. The fact that the Canada Labour Relations Board recognized those units has encouraged the workers on the Hill to feel they would prefer to be covered by the Canada Labour Code provisions rather than by the provisions of Bill C-45.

However, the House of Commons, Senate and Library of Parliament administration appealed the CLRB's decision to the Federal Court. The appeal was heard on January 20 and January 21, 1986, and a decision is expected within the next few days. In the interim, the request by the House of Commons for a stay allowing the employer to avoid participating in the negotiations process was rejected by the court.

I find it strange that we are proceeding with Bill C-45 at this time when we are hearing from the employees on the Hill, the people directly concerned, that they do not want this legislation and they would prefer to be under the Canada Labour Code. Their appeal concerning the Canada Labour Relations Board is still before the courts. Surely it would make more sense to have the court decision first and then look again at what kind of legislation is needed.