

*Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act*

for true collective bargaining rights for employees of Parliament, including employees of Members of Parliament. At this time, we are speaking to a motion that would delay this Bill, because we feel that this Bill should be delayed—in fact it should be withdrawn—because it restricts and does not enhance the collective bargaining rights of parliamentary employees.

I wish I had had a chance to say this a few moments ago when the hon. gentleman named Stanley Knowles was sitting at the Table because it is this gentleman who still sits as a conscience for many of us here in the House. Nineteen years ago, Stanley Knowles spoke of the obligation of Parliament to protect the rights of parliamentary employees. He advocated collective bargaining rights for all employees.

According to a recent report done by Mr. Jeff Parr who has studied this matter at some length, he has said the following:

It is evident that while much is made of parliamentary privilege as an impediment to collective bargaining rights on Parliament Hill, it is evident that Parliament can most certainly, on its own authority, grant those rights to its employees.

This Bill does not grant rights; indeed it restricts them.

Mr. Parr's report is entitled *Preserving the Employee's Prerogative*, and he also said the following:

Tradition has served admirably in preserving the prerogative of employees on Parliament Hill; sheltering them from the interference of the Public Service Commission and the application of merit to staffing decisions, and from the interference of trade unions in managing the parliamentary workforce. But it has been much less successful in protecting employees of Parliament Hill from abuse by their employers.

Some of those employers sit right here in Parliament.

I would like to relate to the House my own personal feelings about this matter. I came to this House as an elected Member in 1979. At that time, and there has not been a great deal of change since, it was very apparent to me how unprotected workers were. I was concerned particularly about the working conditions of workers on the Hill. A number of employees of the Parliamentary Restaurant and others have spoken to me about their concerns, but they are afraid to talk openly because they feel very insecure. They are afraid of making complaints because they do not have any protection. There are no grievance procedures. We all know that there have been incidents of sexual harassment documented by unions, and it is an absolute disgrace that workers on Parliament Hill and in Members' offices are not protected from such offensive practices, not to mention favouritism in general.

I was struck, and I imagine most female Members of the House were struck, by the patriarchal atmosphere of Parliament Hill which still exists. The tradition of patronage in hiring is very offensive, and I am particularly offended when I hear Members of Parliament referring to their staff members as "the girls", as in: "I must have the girls do this". The kind of lack of respect that appears so often in this patriarchal atmosphere would not be tolerated if staff members had a union. It is undemocratic and it is offensive.

Until recently, women and men were locked in traditional job ghettos on the Hill. Women were the waitresses and men were the supervisors and members of the security staff with a higher rate of pay. I congratulate the former Speaker of the House, who is now the Governor General, for the kinds of changes she made. I am referring to changes which moved employees on the Hill one step toward greater equality and equal opportunities. I was also proud to be a part of her project in promoting the first day care facility on the Hill, although I am very concerned that it is not affordable care for many of the lower paid employees, most of whom are women. As well, I wish our staff were much better paid.

• (1550)

This demonstrates that there has been some change, but the slowness of the change has been quite appalling. Also it demonstrates the need for collective bargaining rights for employees who work for Parliament and for Members of Parliament. They should not have to wait for those of us who happen to be their employers to sort of pat them on the head and say: "Now, dear, you will get a little extra bonus or privilege of some kind this year". It should be a right. They should have a proper grievance procedure and all the conditions which go along with collective bargaining rights.

I should like to give two or three examples of the experiences documented by Hill employees. There is quite a long list, but I will mention the ones which pertain particularly to female employees. They are some of the types of problems which reinforce the need for collective bargaining rights as a means to resolve workplace issues. The first example is that of employees of the Library of Parliament who were denied maternity benefits for a full year after such benefits were finally extended to employees of the House of Commons. The administration of the Library states that an administrative error was made. This would not have been allowed to happen if those people had been in a union. Another is the Employee Assistance Program of the House of Commons which was established to give employees a safety-valve or a means of having personal problems dealt with in confidence by a qualified counsellor. Perhaps it was not a bad idea, but earlier this year the EAP counsellor was fired, the position abolished and the program responsibility turned over to the nurses. An appeal to the Speaker asking for the position to be re-established was denied. Two petitions signed by 1,500 Hill employees were ignored. This kind of attitude and denial of sensible employee rights would not take place if employees on the Hill had collective bargaining rights and a union of their choice.

I should like to refer to another example in the support services. A female employee is the object of sexual harassment. Her manager touches her, leans up behind her and rubs against her. When she protests she is assigned a heavier workload. She is later given a poor performance evaluation and finally transferred to another position. I am sure most employees who experience sexual harassment would be afraid to complain about it under the present situation. It should not