

example. The language in new section 11(3)(a) strikes me as slightly ambiguous and I hope there will be a further explanation with respect to it.

I think we would be prepared to move this bill fairly quickly through committee and to give it third reading. I appreciate the bill, and I am sure it is welcomed by Mr. Finkelman and members of the board. I hope it will assist in relieving the tremendous backlog of cases now before the Public Service Staff Relations Board.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity, the first since the joint committee commenced sitting, to express my thanks to the chairman of the Public Service Staff Relations Board. His contribution to our deliberations was at a high level, and he has done an extraordinary job of preparing recommendations with respect to the Public Service of Canada, particularly regarding recommendations for legislative changes in the act. His work reflects the 40 years he has spent in this field. Not only the government and employees of the public service, but indeed all Canadians are fortunate that in the last seven or eight years a man of Mr. Finkelman's character, stature, knowledge and wisdom has been available. I hope I am speaking for more people than myself. I acknowledge my debt to him in our lengthy deliberations, and I thank him for his kindness, wisdom, understanding and help.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I believe it is a valid maxim that justice delayed is justice denied. I believe that maxim also underlines the reason for this bill and emphasizes its urgency. In my opinion, collective bargaining in the public service of Canada was a good idea. There have been some problems, but in general it is working quite well. One of the difficulties is that too much time is required to deal with the problems, the disputes and the adjudications that have to be made under the legislation. The purpose of this bill, therefore, is to enlarge the Public Service Staff Relations Board, to put more of its members on a full-time basis and to provide technical changes that will enable it to deal more expeditiously with the problems that come before it.

As the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) and the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forre-stall) pointed out, the bill is based on a unanimous report submitted to the House some weeks ago by the Special Joint Committee on Employer-Employee Relations in the Public Service. Although there is the one slight change that the President of the Privy Council pointed out, in the main this bill carries out the recommendations and we are happy to support it at this time. I am pleased it is being referred to the same committee that made the recommendations, namely, the special joint committee.

I join with the last speaker in the tribute he paid to Mr. Finkelman. I also want to say that we had before that committee a number of excellent witnesses from both sides of the table, if you will. The committee has done a good job.

Although there have been developments in the last few weeks that have made it difficult for me to be in attendance as much as I would have liked, may I say to fellow members of the committee that my not being there is a vote of confidence in what they have been doing! I look

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forward to the time when we shall bring forward our full report as well, and therefore it seems to me it is not necessary for us to spin out the debate on this bill.

The questions raised by the last speaker can be looked at by the special joint committee when we get the bill there. I hope that within a few days we can have this bill back in the House so that it can have third reading and be passed by the other place in time to become law before we rise for a summer recess, or a fall recess or whatever it might be.

While I am on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I should like to underline what I said a moment ago by way of an aside. I think it was an excellent move on the part of the government and the Parliament of Canada when we established collective bargaining in the public service in 1967. A lot of things have had to be ironed out, and when we make our total report there will be abundant evidence of that fact. But I think it is agreed by both sides that there is no turning the clock back; we must simply go on and try to make collective bargaining work even better.

The only comment on a specific issue I should like to make, since this gives me the opportunity to do so, is with respect to one area in which the government appears before the Public Service Staff Relations Board and seeks its permission. I have in mind the differing practices of the government when it is confronted with what are defined as illegal strikes. I do not wish to raise an argument about strikes, legal or otherwise, at this time but it seems to me the government should be more consistent in what it does.

Some months ago, for example, we had the extensive strike of the general labour and trades group. We have had strikes in the Post Office Department—strikes, slowdowns, and so on. I remind the House, also, that a week or two ago we had a one-day strike by prison guards. I mention these three groups to point out that the government has acted in three different ways with respect to these strikes.

● (1610)

In the case of the general labour and trades group, the government has appeared before the Public Service Staff Relations Board seeking permission to prosecute. In the case of the difficulties in the Post Office, no such appearance before the Public Service Staff Relations Board has occurred. Rather, the Post Office Department has dealt with the situation through its own forms of discipline. In the case of the one-day strike by the prison guards, nothing at all was said, either by way of discipline or by way of seeking permission to prosecute.

I submit that it raises questions in the public service when the government follows these different courses in relation to strikes that take place by government employees. I plead that there be some consistency. I also emphasize, as I did in the committee, that the answer to strikes is not the big stick. The answer is to try to resolve the problems. That is what this bill is all about. The purpose of this bill is to enlarge the board; give it more full-time members and give it the technical and administrative machinery to cope with the problems so that they will not be delayed endlessly, as has been the case recently. It is nobody's fault, it is just that there are so many