

reasonably good frame of mind and not to simply be stubborn and arrogant in refusing this motion.

Mr. Lyle Kristiansen (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to say that one is pleased to rise to address a bill such as the back to work bill now before us, but I am pleased the motion that stands in the name of my colleague, the member for Saskatoon—Dundurn, at least attempts to introduce a little bit of civilized procedure into what is an objectionable piece of legislation.

To comment briefly on the proposal before us itself, the present bill as it now stands would directly name and appoint the chairs of both conciliation boards. It is not just our opinion, but I believe it would be accepted as a fact that in the history of back to work legislation this kind of process is highly unusual and that the normal process would simply outline, within the bill, the process for such appointments after some discussion, or at least take into consideration the rightful opinions of the parties to the bargaining dispute. What this motion would do is delete that whole section and attempt to introduce a procedure whereby the parties themselves would have some opportunity to make the mechanisms involved in conciliation and the methods involved in choosing chairs for the conciliation boards more acceptable.

• (1710)

The failure of the government to take what has been the normal process into account is just one more example in a long history of bungling, ineptitude and lack of consideration shown by this government throughout this entire dispute.

The dispute itself deals with two categories, both ships' crews and hospital services. The employees are represented by the Public Service Alliance of Canada. Both of these groups have been without any economic increase since December, 1986. Their various contracts expired on December 21 and December 31, 1987. In a two-year period the government has bungled so much, so often and in so many ways that it must almost set new precedents in the history of bungled collective bargaining on the part of the federal government.

There are two issues that underline so much of this whole dispute. One is regional parity between the group on both the Atlantic coast and the Pacific coast and on the Lakes, which is involved in Coast Guard services. For hospital employees it is largely a matter of pay equity and equal work of equal value, largely for women workers and those in other lower paid categories who are attempting to get what they are really entitled to by the

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Charter of Rights of this country. The government has stalled, and stalled, and stalled, and stalled for so long that the workers have been left with no other opportunity but to withdraw their labour, a right which is as old as Magna Carta, even though it has not always been practised.

"No man shall be forced to build bridges" was written into the Magna Carta hundreds and hundreds of years ago. This government still does not recognize that right. That is a long time to go back, and a long time to learn a lesson. We are dealing not only with ineptitude, incompetence and what appears to be the worst of bad faith bargaining on the part of this government, but also a failure to recognize basic human rights in accordance with the right to strike.

In my own industry, which was the lumber industry in the province of British Columbia, in which I worked for years before coming to this place for the first time in 1980, we had a strike in 1967 dealing with exactly the issue of regional parity. There it was a matter of parity between the interior of British Columbia and the coastal areas of British Columbia. That strike makes this one so far look like a picnic. It went on seven and a half months and shut down virtually every lumber producing community throughout the southern interior of British Columbia. Feelings were strong. It was 22 years ago that we resolved that issue.

In 1989, is it too much to expect the Government of Canada to recognize that people who operate on the ships doing what they regard as essential services, life-saving services, have not earned that same kind of right 22 years later? That is hard to comprehend.

These two groups of employees are among the lowest paid in the public service, averaging some \$18,000 to \$23,000 per year. That puts them significantly behind their counterparts in the outside sector—anywhere from 14 to 28 per cent, depending on the group and area of employment. Any single parent or one-income family in that kind of group would be at or below poverty levels. That is obviously unacceptable and an unacceptable manner for us and for this government in particular to treat the employees who work so hard to save lives, whether in hospitals or at sea. Both these groups provide services of enormous social and economic importance to the nation. The government has recognized that simply by declaring them absolutely essential, although it did not do it at the proper time in order to keep designated employees on the job. That was some of its bungling. But it has accepted how valuable these employees are to the nation at large by saying that we cannot afford to do