

Sector Bargaining

of businessmen and Canadians in this country, as recent polls have indicated, then hon. members at least should very seriously consider introducing legislation such as the bill which is before us now. I do not care if it is my own personal bill, as long as something along those lines is introduced. I would like to see this bill go to committee. I hope that members opposite who have heard me explain to them the support of their ministers and the reports which have been made by their government supporting sector bargaining will not talk this bill out today. I hope it will at least be allowed to go to the committee stage where these reports can be dealt with in detail and looked at in a more serious and fundamental way.

In closing, I hope hon. members will see fit to support the bill before us. I again repeat very strongly that unless and until a similar piece of legislation is introduced, along with a provision for secret ballot votes on strikes based on the Taft-Hartley Act concept of the United States, which I happen to have on the Order Paper of May 2, 1980, in Bill C-472, then we should very seriously consider taking the right to strike away from essential services in the public sector. Positive steps must be taken now to assist industry and the small businessman, who is having enough troubles as it is with high interest rates and the like. I appeal to hon. members to let this bill at least pass on to committee stage.

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland): Mr. Speaker, I would like briefly to respond to the motion which is now before the House, namely, Bill C-239, to amend the Public Service Staff Relations Act and the Canada Labour Code to provide for the establishment of private sector bargaining.

The hon. member opposite mentioned some studies which have taken place. As members of the House will recall, on March 9, 1978 the then minister of labour, the hon. member for Hamilton East (Mr. Munro), appointed an industrial inquiry commission pursuant to Section 198 of the Canada Labour Code. This commission, chaired by Frances Bairstow, was charged with the responsibility of ascertaining the advantages and disadvantages of wider-based bargaining in federal industries, with particular emphasis on the transportation, grain handling and communication industries; any impediments, legislative or otherwise, to wider-based bargaining or the rationalization of bargaining units; any matters incidental or relating to any of the foregoing matters.

● (1720)

The commission began a comprehensive review of bargaining in the specified industries with 19 days of hearings in five cities throughout Canada. Many of the hearings were held in camera at the request of the parties appearing. Several of the groups which appeared before the commission returned for further appearances in exploration of some of the issues raised in earlier meetings. The commission also held frequent executive sessions and individual commission members interviewed representatives of interested organizations.

In addition to personal testimony, various briefs and correspondence were filed with the commission, both from groups

and organizations which appeared and from some individuals and organizations who were unable to present their views personally.

Between hearings and executive sessions, the commission received correspondence from the public, press accounts, innumerable telephone requests for information and responses to newspaper advertisements announcing appearances in particular cities. Background materials and research analyses were scrutinized and considered. All major allegations made in hearings and in personal interviews were checked and investigated.

Bearing in mind the limited time frame for the submission of its report, the commission concluded that priority had to be given to those sectors containing the greatest potential for disruption of services. Thus, the commission decided it should restrict its inquiry to aviation, airport services and grain handling.

The railway industry is already deeply involved in its own form of wider-based bargaining. Indeed, the experience of the management and labour groups in the railways provided many witnesses with important background information for the commission.

In the shipping industry there also exist many coalitions of bargaining groups. The commission decided that to disturb these relationships until the parties have had a further opportunity to assess their experience would be injudicious, particularly since the record of work stoppages both in seafaring and in port facilities gives some basis for optimism for the future. This has not always been the case, but it seems to have been so in recent times.

In studying the record of work stoppages and other disruptions as well as the potential for damage to the public, the commission concluded that its limited time and resources would best be deployed in a search for improvements to the bargaining process in the high priority areas of air transportation, airport services and grainhandling. Their importance to the nation's economy and relationships to other industrial sectors is a barometer by which the Canadian economy is judged by other countries. In summary, the selection of problems for study was determined on a basis of priorities.

Early in the commission's deliberations the interrelationship with the public service became apparent. Key to the grain handling operations were those who are a vital part of that industry, but whose employer is the Government of Canada. In airport services virtually all job functions are performed by public sector employees, but their impact on the highly integrated field of commercial aviation is immense. This can be demonstrated by considering that no airline pilot, flight attendant, mechanic or ticket agent can continue working in the face of a work stoppage resulting from a dispute between airport firefighters and the Government of Canada. The reverse might not necessarily be true.

A similar dichotomy between the public and private sector exists in the grain-handling industry where integration of job functions is essential to productivity. While the commission's