

*Private Members' Business*

Among companies that were not affected by Bill 45, we saw some very long strikes, like the one at Voyageur which lasted two years. The strike occurred after Bill 45 was passed but in Quebec, Bill 45 did not apply to Voyageur. I met union members winter and summer, since my office was nearby and the strike lasted two years. They were on the picket line. Today, I know one of the Liberal members of this House was president of Voyageur and wouldn't even give them the time of day—

The strike went on because they hired strike breakers, scabs and because of that, workers involved in the Voyageur dispute were unemployed for two years in Quebec.

I don't want that to happen to anyone. It's very hard on a family. And that is why I am delighted to support the bill presented by the hon. member for Richelieu.

Now, to give you an example of the impact of Bill 45 on which the Private Member's Bill of the hon. member for Richelieu is based, if we consider the hours or time lost as a result of labour disputes in Quebec—this bill was passed ten years ago in Quebec—the average number of days for a labour dispute dropped from 171 to 111 today. That is what I call progress.

If we accept the fact that some strikes are inevitable, because some employers are smart and others are not so smart, and if we give employees the right to strike and at the same time give an employer the right to hire strike breakers, what are we really doing? Well, Quebec's statistics tell the story. We are telling union workers: Go ahead and go on strike. You don't have to eat. You don't need money. You don't need peace of mind. Other people will take your place. I am the employer, and the government gives me the right to hire whoever I need to replace you. Go ahead and strike! I don't mind, as long as it doesn't hurt me. By giving unionized workers the right to strike, we have made matters worse, because their strike has no impact and it does not in any way disrupt the company. This means that workers are out of work, are not getting a salary and have to beg for their minimum needs. Meanwhile, the employer can play "Joe Cool": Sure, there is a strike, has been for two years, but who cares? And that is what the situation is like, Mr. Speaker.

• (1850)

The bill presented by the hon. member for Richelieu could vastly improve relations between labour and management. That has already been proved in Quebec.

I heard critical comments from the Liberals and the Conservatives. I thought it was rather funny to hear the criticism coming from Conservatives, especially since the hon. member who presented the bill is a former Conservative member who saw the light, who realized what it meant to be a conservative and changed his affiliation. Now he is right next door to us, on this side of the House. When I hear his former colleagues speak out against him, saying that this bill is bad for the country, I think that is pretty farfetched. They say this bill is going to disrupt business when the exact opposite happened in Quebec! Instead of disrupting business, it settled a number of disputes in almost record time, Mr. Speaker.

I heard both Conservative and Liberal critics say the bill only affects Crown corporations. And so what! We have to start somewhere. You start with Crown corporations, and you will see how effective this kind of legislation can be. I don't think this criticism is valid.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I must say essential services are not defined, and that this does not allow a department any discretionary authority. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the Quebec legislation, provides for a commission that determines what services are essential and hands down rulings in this regard. For the past ten years, this has worked well in Quebec. I hope that by supporting this bill, we may then be able to amend it, if necessary and at least refer it to committee for consideration.

[*English*]

**Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth):** Mr. Speaker, once again hon. members of the House are asked to give further consideration to Private Member's Bill C-201, introduced by the hon. member for Richelieu, and first debated in the House on May 31, 1990.

From the time of our first consideration of the bill, we have had an opportunity to reflect and consider the arguments that were put forward in support of the bill when it was first debated. We have since had an opportunity to weigh the strengths and shortcomings of these