

*Canada Labour Code*

siders that we are dealing with only 530,000 out of 2.1 million people who belong to labour unions, it is evident that we are actually missing out on the 4.5 million workers who do not belong to labour unions. I think this is a very important point.

• (2020)

Certainly, in regard to the danger inherent in strikes which we face at the present time, the bill does nothing to affect the collective bargaining of federal public servants such as air controllers or the CBC NABET members who are covered by the Public Service Staff Relations Act. So I am concerned about this, because really we are not dealing with a bill that is as comprehensive as it is said to be. I think it is intolerable that in Canada we still suffer many strikes and a tremendous loss of man-days year by year. It is interesting to note that in 1970, the last year for which complete statistics are available, we had 542 strikes with a loss of more than 6,539,560 man-workdays. While this represented a slight decrease from the previous year, the fact remains that the strike situation and loss of man-workdays has been increasing at a very rapid rate.

In 1950 there were 160 strikes and lockouts with a loss of 1,387,500 man-workdays. In 1960 there were 274 strikes or lockouts with a loss of considerably less work days, 738,700. In 1970 there was the tremendous loss to the economy of 6,539,560 man-workdays. I do not think the economy can stand to lose the tremendous amount of dollars and value that this represents. There ought to be a better way to settle contracts between labour and management. I think the machinery or methods represented in these statistics belong to an age which should have passed a long time ago.

I only wish this bill would go much further to settle some of these problems. I wish it would bring in something new that would really give some hope to both management and labour, not to mention the third party, the public, who suffers and has to pay most of the bills. Surely there ought to be a better way. While tonight it is not my purpose to enlarge on this aspect of the bill, herein I believe is the major weakness in our whole labour structure so far as collective bargaining is concerned. When labour leaders such as George Meany talk out on this very thing perhaps it is an indication that organized labour itself is beginning to understand that the present approach is not the answer. So far as I can see, this is not the situation in Canada, whether on the labour-union side or on the government side.

I think there are a few basic points we should remind ourselves of in dealing with a bill such as this. We must remember we live in a pluralistic society which allows for the expression of more than one ultimate life principle. In our country we are raised from birth in the tradition that it is right and proper for people to march to the sound of different drums, compelled by their respective convictions honestly arrived at. Indeed, the notion that harmony need not be imperilled by diversity is one of the objectives of the Canadian experience. This very principle ought to be more evident in the organized labour situation as we see it today. The tradition is accepted in the areas of politics, education, church affiliation and virtually all other areas of activity, and I can see no reason why the

[Mr. Thompson.]

objectives should be different when men and women go to work.

The freedom to work, the freedom of association and the freedom to support the political party of one's choice are of more enduring importance to Canada than a particular set of labour relations statutes or a code of labour relations such as we have in this bill. All freedoms must be viewed in the context of the civil right to freedom of worship which embraces both the right to hold religious convictions and the right to translate those convictions into the fabric of everyday life in the factory or wherever the place of work might be.

In a free society men should not be forced to accept uniform patterns of life and organization. There ought to be a real opportunity provided so that men can freely form those organizations and institutions which give expression to their legitimate aspirations. This does not mean that our society should be divided into unrelated fragments. In diversity, a generous amount of co-operation is possible provided an attitude of true respect and good will is present. If this is true in the very basis of the political structure of the country, why does it not apply also in the area of work?

It seems to me that the Bill of Rights of Canada and the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations define very clearly that the right to work is one of the basic freedoms of people. The right of association and freedom of association is equally one of the basic freedoms fundamental to our way of life. If freedom of association is a fundamental part of our way of life, then surely freedom to disassociate should also be part of our way of life. It seems to me this bill does nothing to even begin to approach the problem of which I am speaking. I regret that we have not gone further in this regard.

Actually, what is happening today is that we are pitting labour and management against each other. It is the adversary system that is wrong in trying to meet the problem of labour relations. There ought to be a genuinely co-operative area in which the evil spirit of economic conflict will not be the basic reality which exists, as it does today. If we go along in the system and attitude expressed in this bill, management and unions will continue to be deadlocked in bitter disputes which are but the logical result of the tense, warlike atmosphere in which many contract talks are conducted. No one wants to give. Everybody wants to take. It is like a tug-of-war where the strongest wins and the winner takes all.

• (2030)

I say that this bill could meet the problem more realistically than it does. For a variety of reasons, I think in this debate we should be considering whether the present collective bargaining system based on the individualistic employer by employer, trade by trade majority rule concept, including the right to strike and lockout, can cope with the new problems thrust upon the work force, and whether the capitalist-oriented employers organizations and politically-oriented trade unions even try to rise to the challenge of finding a substitute for what the royal commission headed by Ivan C. Rand rightly branded "the crudely developed bargaining, conciliation and strike ritual."