

Canadian Arsenals Limited

Governor in Council are designed and in fact used, if we look at history, to strip rights from workers who are falsely led to believe that they will come their way. The fight is no longer one where the workers of Canadian Arsenals would be forced to cash out their pension plans and live under whatever SNC decided. It also does not group the pension plans, Mr. Speaker. I think workers in other areas of Crown Corporations are looking to see what happens in this struggle in Parliament and how the Government and the House will respond to a very real dilemma.

• (1240)

Many of the workers, and yourself, Mr. Speaker, if not all workers in the country at some point in their lives have to plan how they will care for themselves and their families. They have to look at costs between the time they stop working and the time they pass on. It seems to me that the Minister and government Members who have spoken have not really taken into account the kind of bombshells they have been throwing at the munitions workers. They started off by saying: "You will have to divest out of the plan—cash out." Then the Government moved to this extremely vague proposal which allows for some options. By being so non-specific it means that we as Members of this House are not doing the job we should be doing, that of setting a blueprint.

Regardless of which Party we belong to, the Government has 211 Members and can vote through whatever it wants. It seems to me that in the interests of workers, their ability to plan to have a decent and liveable pension plan when they do decide to retire, we have done a very poor job as the House of Commons. The Government has done a terrible job in responding to the real concerns of the workers.

Let us now take a look at the proposal, which is somewhat better, Motion No. 2, brought forward by the Hon. Member who just spoke. It is something I do not like because it does not address the issue of pensions head on. I am not saying that Bill C-87 should necessarily be the panacea for pension plans for the portability and transfer of pensions from the private to the public sector or from the public to the private sector or private to private. Let me read Motion No. 2:

An employee of the Corporation, as of the day prior to the date of transfer, will have the right, on transferring to the new employer, either to:

- (a) choose to remain and continue as a contributor to the federal superannuation plan—

That sounds very reasonable.

—and the employee will pay both the employee's and the employer's shares of the required contributions to the plan; or—

I want to come back to that part of the motion.

- (b) become a contributor to the pension plan as described in the agreement of purchase and sale between the government and the new employer

The new employer is SNC.

Let me come back to paragraph (a) of Motion No. 2, because I have some concerns about it. I am not as concerned as with the Government amendment, but it is one that I think could really benefit from some clarity and drafting in that this

will force the workers to renegotiate with SNC as a result of paragraph (a).

It says the employee will pay both the employee's and the employer's shares of the required contribution. "X" being the annual cost to the employee and historically to the employer means that there will have to be a great deal of pressure brought on SNC to live up to this. It does not provide what I see as being the most appropriate mechanism, which should have been drafted by now by the Government, in terms of the actual move of all of those years that have been earned by the employees under the public service, so they could carry on in a realistic way and pay in the same way they are paid now, rather than having to enter into a new process of negotiations.

I recognize there is a reason why this has been drafted in this way. There is, however, a better way to do this, not only for the workers of CAL, but for other workers who will be faced with the same dilemma. As was raised by the Hon. Member who just said down, the Government, even under the present administration, is not applying the same kind of criteria to situations that are similar. It all depends on how much pressure is brought on them, and what kinds of co-operation they are getting from the purchaser of an operation such as Canadian Arsenals Limited, and what kind of heat is created in the House of Commons itself.

There is a great deal more than could and should be done. It is something that Canadians will have to reflect on, whether or not this is truly the fairest way possible for this kind of privatization to take place. The Government has a majority. It is its choice, but I think the voices that have been heard in the House of Commons and from the Public Service Alliance of Canada is that what has been proposed so far is pretty tacky and pretty hard to take.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate on the report stage of Bill C-87 and the motions numbered 1, 2 and 3 for debate. I will try to focus my comments on the subject as a whole. The House will recall that the motion we are now considering is aimed at amending Bill C-87, specifically with respect to the matter of pensions.

Mr. Speaker, I may refer to comments I made here in the House on March 11 of this year, when I pointed out in debate that I was not happy with the provisions made by the Government in this Bill with respect to pensions.

The comments I made at the time may be found on page 11,422 of Hansard and perhaps I may recall what I said at the time, reading from Hansard of March 11, 1986:

We do not have that guarantee. We do not have much information dealing with the pension arrangements. We will be looking forward in committee to getting from the Minister some of the answers to these questions.

Mr. Speaker, about the pensions... well, we saw what happened this week when employees from Canadian Arsenals demonstrated in front of the Parliament Buildings to protest