

The Address—Mr. Gibson

The Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, dealt with labour. I believe that despite criticism expressed by some people, collective bargaining in Canada can in fact function humanely under existing labour laws. The difficulties do not lie in the system of collective bargaining but, rather, in the inability of some to make the best use of that system. The purpose of collective bargaining laws is not the settlement of disputes but, rather, to provide the mechanism whereby collective agreements can be contracted as a result of peaceful negotiations conducted in an atmosphere of genuine concern, in a spirit of good faith.

No one can deny that those who advocate the abolition of the right to strike as a general rule, rather than abolition in exceptional circumstances, overlook the fact that, with sufficient provocation the worker can lay down tools anyway and strike illegally. For example, in the recent police strike in Montreal, policemen, underpaid and ignored by society, felt compelled to strike illegally. Policemen do not have the right to strike, but when society ignored them and when humanity and justice provided them with no other choice, they went on strike. The result was an illegal strike, a bitter and violent confrontation. Why, then, is there so much turmoil today in the ranks of labour? It is partly owing to the social unrest prevalent throughout the world, as has been demonstrated by student riots at universities and similar breakdowns in social order which result in violence. Also, it is partly owing to a gang of lawless gangsters who seek power through violence and who prostitute law and order by gang terrorist tactics.

Our challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to forge a new social consciousness. It is to improve the isolation of the urban worker in a technological world. We want to remove that isolation from his life.

An hon. Member: Did the hon. member read that?

Mr. Gibson: We must provide kindness and sympathy for workers in those places where today there is autocracy and indifference toward their lives. Those engaged in labour and management must appreciate that the decisions reached in collective bargaining agreements have a profound impact upon the community at large, and sometimes the impact causes disastrous results. Abnormally large wage increases, particularly, result in lower profits and higher prices. Thus, goods become more expensive to produce and sell, and costs become greater. Prices escalate, and as a result sales become greatly reduced and finally unemployment results.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Too frequently industry greedily grabs record-breaking profit and then flatly refuses to pay labour increased wages and fringe benefits. For example, the Canadian banks have made great profits; they have been great profit-makers but they have kept some of their employees at shockingly low income levels. The government recently substantially increased the minimum wage for federal employees, including bank employees. The record of the banks with regard to labour relations is

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poor. Management has ignored the human factor and failed to adjust its labour policy to the fast age of impersonal technology.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we must prevent the embryo, so-called right to incite riot and revolution. We must restore law and order from coast to coast in Canada. We need vastly improved social communications between management and labour. In my view, the burden is on management to inject a new attitude of friendship and co-operation with workers. At present a team spirit is lacking. Labour needs to be treated with appreciation and respect, not treated with scorn as useless, worn-out equipment with little or nothing to contribute. A warm and kind attitude by the employer would greatly improve this sad state of affairs, which amounts to a miserable by-product of the modern industrial state. Further, at all levels of society we must enhance respect for law and order and we must be severe in punishing crimes of violence.

We must strengthen the symbols of national unity by naming July 1, Canada Day. Frequent polls throughout this nation indicate that the vast majority of Canadians want this change. Young Canadians, in particular, who have grown up with the Canadian flag demand and insist upon Parliament changing the name of the national day to Canada Day. I have faith in young Canadians. Their idealism and interest in sports and anti-pollution measures has strengthened and developed our national character. I am proud that this government lowered the voting age to 18 years. I am also proud that despite undue emphasis on the mass media, the vast majority of young Canadians are constructive in outlook and hard-working in action. They are sports minded and athletic. They have a dream of Canada which we must foster, nurture and develop. We will do this. We must continue to provide programs such as the Voyageur plan which enabled many young Canadians to travel across our land and learn to know this great country.

I hope our future plans for the armed forces reserves will give opportunity for anti-pollution training. National defence has enemies in many forms of polluters, and our young people can be used in the struggle for our defence in the war against pollution, the war to exist. However, we must not allow our armouries to become flop-houses for drop-outs and beatniks, many of whom are not Canadian and have no place in Canadian society.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gibson: Participatory democracy is not an empty phrase but is, rather, the logical and real result of planned adaptation to the needs of Canadian society today.

With respect to the Constitution, Mr. Speaker, I have served on the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on the Constitution. This committee is in the process of meeting the public at assemblies in each province and territory of Canada. A very helpful dialogue has been and will continue to be carried on in each area of Canada. Members of all parties serve on this committee. We are working together in harmony in the interests of