

The ramification of Bill C-377 (A bill which, on the surface appears to remedy a wholly invented problem?) would have a tremendous financial impact on organized labour in general and our local union in particular. "This is an attempt to create an issue that doesn't exist."

In Canada's trade union movement, financial statements are audited and reported to elected executive boards, to all union locals, and to delegates at conventions. Annual audited statements must be filed with both provincial and federal labour boards. The Canada Labour Code requires that financial statements be available to our local Union members. Where those statements are not routinely provided to all members, individual union members can request them from their locals and directly from labour boards. The reporting requirements contemplated by the bill are completely unnecessary. The existing process is open, fair, democratic and accountable.

Each union's financial information is already available to members at meetings where anyone can attend and see the numbers for themselves. We already abide by financial disclosure rules, mostly imposed at the provincial level of government, and do so because it ensures that we are accountable to our members and not just because they are driven by legislation. We also have Local Union Bylaws and a Union Constitution (that require member involvement and authorization for any and all new expenditures, ie: the cost of administering these proposed requirements "that no money can be spent without a motion on the floor") that would need to be amended.

The federal government's bid to force unions to open their books to the public is nothing more than a political ploy to bash unions. It's another bullying attempt. We are doing nothing and being attacked again. It is one more example of a conservative government built on destroying our local unions' autonomy and governance.

This proposed bill is clearly unfair and hypocritical, placing demanding reporting requirements on labour organizations, while exempting other classes of organizations that receive the same kind of tax-exempt status. Interestingly, this is the exact situation that applies to professional associations like the doctors, lawyers and accountants who pay association dues. (They are usually called professional fees because professional fees sound much more appropriate in polite conversation than union dues.) These other professional fees are also 100% tax deductible and regulated by the same section of the Income Tax Act but they aren't targeted by Bill C-377. If the government were indeed interested in accountability and transparency, it would first take a long hard look inward, especially when taxpayer-funded MPs are not required and don't disclose full details of their spending. There is currently far more scrutiny and transparency regarding the financial statements of trade unions than there is in corporations in this country.

This government has no business lecturing anybody on transparency. We have never had any explanation from the government for what has happened to the tens of billions of dollars that profitable corporations have received from Canadian taxpayers. By the year 2014, the current government, since 2006, will have given the corporate sector over \$220 billion of corporate tax cuts. That is \$220 billion! The Conservative government's call for accountability is sanctimonious nonsense. This bill amounts to a double standard. It does not make sense, unless the same is required of their own house. Let them do it for companies, the banks and the multinationals. That way there will be a level playing field for bargaining.

This proposed legislation was ideologically motivated, with no evidence that labour organizations are not accountable to their members. There is strong reason to believe that it is a planned, orchestrated plan of this offensive, odious piece of legislation, using the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale as a vehicle for the government to express its views of contempt and prejudice against the labour movement that has given us so much throughout the history of this country.

The writer of this proposed bill, Conservative MP Russ Hiebert, who says "I am here to serve my constituents and Canadians as a whole", and seems to be backed by such anti-union groups as the Fraser Institute, the Merit Shop Contractors and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, just

conforms to his party's now standard practise of introducing needless legislation to deal with non-existent problems. This bill will make privileged information available to businesses and to the government, which will give them unfair competitive and political advantages. With this bill the employer sitting across the negotiating table would have ready access to all the financial information it might need to wage a war of attrition designed to bankrupt a union, financial information that provides the other side with a spectacular competitive advantage?

We have seen that whenever the government has had an opportunity to put the boots to working people, it has taken that opportunity. It's wrong to single out labour groups for such scrutiny. We do not deserve this kind of attack.

This legislation is as unnecessary as it is irresponsible. People are still being bullied. Whose interests will this bill serve? It will not serve the interests of unions and working people.

This bill has the potential to violate the right to freedom of association in this country, as well as the rights to privacy and freedom of expression. The provisions in this bill go far beyond what is expected of charities. We would have to post the amounts being drawn from our Pensions, Health and Welfare and Training Funds, (which have absolutely no tax-payer dollar contributions), creating concerns around privacy. It will disclose your private information if you are receiving a commuted value pension, if there is a matrimonial split in your pension and if your kids are getting drugs under the plan valued at more than \$5,000 a month. It will report the salary of any person who works for your local union. I ask you this. Is it any of my business what your parents or grandparents pension is worth, or what medications their healthcare package covers or doesn't cover, or what personal health benefits enjoyed by you or any of your children? Or how much you and your family donate to which charities? I think not.

This proposed bill amounts to nothing more than an insult to working people in this country. It is a partisan assault on the men and women who go to work every day to provide for their families and the unions who represent them. With this legislation, the government is breaching the bounds of fundamental fairness.

With all due respect, I am once again asking that you vote against this proposed bill as a statement of fairness and respect for privacy.

Rick Prouty

Genera I Teamsters Local 362