

LYNA WILLIAMS FEB 16 1976

Having listened to a multitude of speeches in my organization -- and having given quite a few -- over nearly 30 years of service, I know it's really true that it's better to give than to receive. I also believe that, despite all the technical innovations of the "global village", there is still a place for the formal speech as an instrument of communication, and I welcome the opportunity to use it which you have provided me to-day.

My purpose will be to speak as plainly as I possibly can about a number of issues which, in my view at least, need some clarity of expression in the most desperate way. I approach this audience with respect for your willingness to obtain new information and to try to cut through the often inflamed and incautious rhetoric of the day. I hope that you won't consider these remarks merely argumentative, but will understand that my purpose is to communicate as candidly as I can.

I'm also aware that in the confusion and controversy that is whirling around union-management relationships today it's difficult to keep an open mind and maintain some perspective. In any relationships, between individuals and between institutions people sometimes regret the things they say thoughtlessly.

The postmaster general declared his employees were not patriotic citizens for striking last year. The Ontario member of the Anti-Inflation Board says he doubts the leadership of the unions is in touch with their membership. We have seen vicious and incessant attacks on our Metro Toronto teachers for being greedy and selfish. Some of these attacks have been carried in newspapers and over broadcasting stations by commentators whose own salaries are several times the wages of teachers. It all reminds me about what the Irish playwright Oliver Goldsmith said. He observed that the "true use of speech is not so much to express wants as to conceal them".

I don't think the labour movement can ever be accused of concealing our wants. In part that's because the very process by which we communicate is an open one. When those in more fortunate positions than wage-earners press their demands they do it of course more quietly. In the 18 months up to last August the nickel corporations our union negotiates with, International Nickel, Sherritt Gordon, Falconbridge, raised prices five times for a total increase in world prices of 44%. -- price increases which must have had serious impact as they worked their way through the world economy! Yet these price increases caused hardly any reproach that I'm aware of from governments or industries that buy nickel or consumers who ultimately use it. Maybe that's because nickel corporations don't, or don't have to, throw picket lines around the Consumers' Association when they announce higher prices.

It should be understood, in these days of discussion about big corporations and big unions, that the union has no involvement in the establishment of these prices. We've made some attempts to have some discussion about them ~~over~~ ^{have} the years, but always been advised in no uncertain terms that prices aren't our business, that prices aren't negotiable. Prices are demands that the corporations make on our society, demands which are almost always met - what choice really do we have?

When it comes to working Canadians and their incomes, however, the rules change. Their needs, or wants, or demands must be bargained in the public eye. I've no complaint about that - to me that's an essential element of what a democratic way of life is all about. But it's the kind of openness that should apply to the other sectors of society as well, particularly to those, like the corporations, who exercise a much more basic kind of power than does the labour movement. It's part of what we mean when we talk of the need for social responsibility.

So what do we in the labour movement want more than more? Well obviously, and let me say it now, not that I imagine any of you are in any doubt, we want to be rid of this insane war which has been declared on free collective bargaining and on workers' incomes, before it does unimaginable damage to the very fabric of our society.

But the fact that the war is on, that the labour movement feels it is necessary to prepare itself for a struggle like none it has engaged in heretofore, other than the struggles of its very creation, underlines so many of our wants and our concerns.

I wish that there were more attention paid by everyone to the benefits of collective bargaining between employees and employers. I wish that more explanation would be provided by our news media about why employees organize and why in the rare time it's necessary, they withdraw services. I also wish there were greater understanding of the economic forces underneath the collective bargaining arena.

But instead of understanding we have a declaration that collective bargaining is the culprit, that workers' incomes must be controlled. This despite the fact that wage increases inevitably must trail behind price increases, despite the lack of evidence to support that wages have been an ingredient in the twin-digit inflation that wracks our country and other economies around the world.

I noticed a couple of days ago the federal labour minister said that our country's inflation rates Canada 10th worst in the world's 24 leading industrialized nations. A few weeks ago the Globe and Mail carried a small story that said Canada's performance in terms of coping with price increases is one of the best compared with similar countries because the rate of increase in our inflation is among the lowest of the 24 countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. There is obviously some confusion, but there is no confusion in homes of average Canadians. Prices are up, and wages are not keeping pace.

In the two years 1973 and 1974 average weekly wages and salaries paid in Canada rose 21.8% but were overtaken by the cost of living, which went up 22.7%. That meant in real dollars the value of wages and salaries declined. And while that was going on in the same time period the slice of the economic pie going to wage earners was shrinking. The percentage of net national income going to labour declined from 1971 to 1974, and although it recovered somewhat in 1975 is to-day no higher than in 1969. These are facts that every working man and every working woman knows. The paycheques don't go so far as they ought to. And that is why the Canadian Labour Congress is leading the opposition to the wage-control features of the government's program, because they weigh heaviest on those who will suffer most from controls. Controls for the great majority of working Canadians will prevent them from re-capturing the wealth they have produced in goods and services to their country.

And the inability of the government and private industry to create more jobs only reinforces in minds of working people the need to secure incomes now. The working Canadian can't afford to wait for tomorrow, can't afford to bank on the government's hopes for lower inflation rates next year or later. The car payment is due now. The rent and the mortgage are due this month. The sons and daughters want their opportunity to go to college or university this autumn.

Canada has one of the worst unemployment rates in the world among the industrialized countries. There is no right to a job in our country. There are fewer than 100,000 job vacancies -- many of them only for part-time work -- and over seven times as many looking for work. And the jobless statistics that the government is jiggling and niggling with don't reveal the entire dimension of the unemployment crisis. The statistics don't say how many have given up looking for work, and they don't say how many are under-employed -- who have taken jobs where they cannot use their full talents for benefit of the economy. The unemployed statistics don't even count the unemployment among our first citizens, the Inuit and the native Indians.

The blame for the increasing number of people on welfare in this city was put by the welfare commissioner on the lack of jobs. Productivity in the economy is sapped by unemployment - the purchasing power of hundreds of thousands is yanked out of the economy - and this is the environment in which the government has inserted wage controls. It's not only economic madness but it demonstrates a callous disregard for the needs of the people of Canada.

We are told that we are in danger of pricing ourselves out of the world markets. If this were true it would obviously be reason for real concern, but it is not so. The prices of our imports are rising faster than the prices we charge for exports.

Further justification is provided by government spokesmen and many industry people who support wage controls by pointing to negotiated wage settlements in the United States and comparing them with Canadian contract settlements. This would be fair if there were a standard of comparison. But the American statistics do not include public employees, and the public sector is where many higher than average settlements occurred last year.

Teachers, fire fighters, police officers, hospital workers and others who work for the public decided they had to balance their needs with the sacrifices they recognize they have to accept by working for governments, school boards and municipalities. When we preach public interest to employees, and when those concerned are doing some of society's most unpleasant work, they have little choice but to conclude that their interests are the public interest, too, and that in exchange for taking essential jobs there should be appropriate recognition in the paycheque.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees used to compare the wages of zoo keepers with hospital orderlies and point out that in many major cities the people who tend the animals earned more than the people who care for people. It appears they still do. Zoo keepers at the Metro Toronto Zoo earn \$5.36 an hour today, and hospital orderlies at Toronto General \$4.59 an hour.

Now I know there is no simple way of determining what a job is worth. For more than two decades the Steelworkers union has worked at it, and we've developed a sophisticated and comprehensive job evaluation system called Co-operative Wage Study. The employees are full and equal partners with management in revising job categories and in evaluating the skills, responsibilities and other factors that determine the scale of jobs in Co-operative Wage Study.

The job, not the job-holder, is evaluated, so there's no chance of discrimination. And the employees have a true voice in determining what their job is worth. But when the government and the advocates of wage controls superimpose an inequitable and discriminatory scheme on collective bargaining, it makes the whole business of evaluating jobs and working out an equitable job classification system all the more difficult.

Let me give you a few more examples of why the government's rationalizations for the wage control program won't stand up to scrutiny.

Another reason international comparisons of wage settlements are invalid is that in the United States cost-of-living formulas are more common in contracts. In Canada we are only starting to expand the unlimited cost-of-living feature. New contracts negotiated after agreements that contain cost-of-living clauses obviously will show slower rates of wage increases.

Another flaw in comparing U.S. wage settlements statistics with Canadian settlements is that the negotiated increases in the Canadian data are computed on the lowest paid job, while in the United States the computation is made on the average job. Obviously a 50-cent-an-hour increase is a lower percentage of an average rate and a higher percentage of the base rate.

Yet these differences received scant, if any, attention from cabinet ministers who touted the figures to show that Canadian wages are rising faster than American wages. Certainly not publicly, nor privately either. There were meetings between cabinet ministers and the Canadian Labour Congress to discuss restraint. But discussion is really a euphemism for what went on. There was no attempt to consult in any meaningful way. The government had made up its mind to blame people and wages for the high cost of living.

There was no response to the Canadian Labour Congress program for dealing with price increases, which included action in the most serious areas of the economy, especially housing, interest rates and energy. The union movement has no choice but to oppose the wage-control program because the unions have no say in creating a fair alternative to the program. The government presented its program as a fait accompli. I agree with the man who said,

It is high time that all Canadians accept the fact that unions are indeed a vital part of Canada's social and economic fabric. It is not good for unions to be hived-off from any real role in the determination of the social or economic future of the country..... It is unrealistic, to put it mildly, to demand that the labour movement follow broad economic policies it has had no hand in shaping, or to respect high-level decisions made without its participation, often without its being consulted.

That was John Munro, the labour minister, speaking only days before the government imposed controls. I think this audience has a right to know these facts so that when the Canadian Labour Congress is portrayed as obstinate and selfish you will understand that there was no room for accommodation. There was no consultation. There was only the ultimatum. And that is why not a single representative active in union interests is part of the machinery of the wage-control program.

There is another fact that discredits the line that Canadian workers are pricing themselves out of the world markets.

While our exports grew over-all by 2% last year, our exports of end products grew by 11%. We're doing better selling manufactured products from the more labour-intensive part of the economy than we are selling raw materials in the resource industries, which are more capital intensive and employ proportionately smaller numbers of people. So our exports are going up. And our export position and our balance of trade position would improve still further if our government intervened in the appropriate ways in the economy by requiring more processing of our raw materials, minerals, timber and other resources in this country instead of exporting jobs and income.

Let me get a little more specific. Our union has taken the time to find out what similar employees earn in different countries. The facts just don't substantiate the image that the Canadian public is being sold of unreasonable demands on the economy, especially by unions. The foundry workers in the best contracts our union has in Ontario were compared with foreign workers doing the same jobs.

Now let me make it clear there are not large numbers of workers in the Ontario foundry industry - - it is not so large as the basic steel industry, but it is an important part of the provincial economy. The maintenance craftsmen our union is privileged to represent in Ontario earn a little under \$5 an hour. Their counterparts in Denmark earn \$6.66 an hour. Their counterparts in the United States, \$6.35. The patternmaker, another relatively common job in foundries, earns \$5.08 an hour in Ontario, but \$5.33 in Switzerland and \$6.52 across the border in the U.S. The moulders in our union in foundries earn \$4.80 an hour, and their United States counterparts earn \$5.30, the Swedes, \$5.15, the Swiss \$5.14, the Danes, over \$7.00.

Now I know international comparisons can fluctuate daily as changes occur in the exchange rate. Nevertheless I am confident that the trend does not support the idea that Canadians are rushing irrationally toward economic disaster because some foundry workers earn \$4.80 an hour.

And so let me state a few conclusions right here. Number one, the labour movement of Canada has been unjustly vilified, and the working people of this country have been unfairly maligned by those who try to escape their own responsibilities for the economic problems of our nation.

Number two, the power of the union movement to do anything about the economic problems in a positive or a negative way is grossly exaggerated. I am not going to say we are a weak movement. I believe we are a strong alliance of people working for a common and useful goal: the protection of people in the workplace and the marketplace.

But the real power isn't in the hands of union members. We read about strikes by labour all the time. It's big news on TV. But what about strikes by capital? The potash corporations have been on strike against the people of Saskatchewan for two years, refusing to report financial data required by Saskatchewan law, failing to pay royalties and taxes required by law, and refusing to expand the industry so the province's potash production grows to meet rising world demand. The newspapers say euphemistically that Noranda, Cominco, and the other corporations have "lost confidence in the investment climate." I call it a strike. I wonder where are all the headlines screaming about the corporations holding the tiny province of Saskatchewan up to ransom?

In any case that's real economic power -- the power to make jobs, to move the economy, to invest, shut down, start up, set prices and production. No

union has that kind of power. But the accusation of "union power" goes on. And I resent it not only because it is used to malign a good, decent and democratic movement whose goals have never been power for itself but for its members, who are the taxpayers of Canada. I resent that kind of wholesale stereotyped image-making because it impedes public understanding of important issues and it hinders the search for solutions. I was appalled, for example, to read the submission of the Steel Co. of Canada to the Royal Commission on Corporate Concentration. Stelco said:

.....In the Canadian steel industry no company has any real power to resist the United Steelworkers of America.....There is no effective control of union power. The pricing policies of companies have to reflect the pricing policies of the unions; and criticism of the response of companies to market forces ought to be directed at union power.....Even the most powerful company cannot resist uncontrolled union power.

Now before we pass the collection plate for poor little Stelco, let's look at the facts. It is a fabrication for Stelco to posture as weak and enfeebled because of the power of the United Steelworkers union.

I am proud to have played a role in negotiating the recent basic steel contracts with the steel industry in this hotel just last summer. I remember not only the pride of the bargaining committee over what they had accomplished in two months of negotiations. I also remember graphically the disappointment over what they failed to win.

Vacations are just one example. I think this audience can appreciate very well that summer holidays are something we wish to enjoy ourselves and wish for others. In every set of negotiations I can remember we have worked for improvements in vacations at Stelco to enable more employees to get summer holidays. Nevertheless, there are men at the Hilton Works in Hamilton who have worked 20 years for Stelco and have yet to enjoy a summer holiday with their wives and children. Their children have grown up and in some cases probably left home now without knowing that experience -- unless of course there's a strike.

The union has proposed a two-week shutdown during the summer to enable all employees to enjoy some summer holidays. But Stelco steadfastly says no, and has said no for the 30 years we've been bargaining.

Now the Steelworkers have achieved a great deal through collective bargaining in Stelco, and it's one of the reasons we support that way of solving problems and why we want collective bargaining enhanced and extended to involve more employees and companies. But this union has as yet not been able to solve the vacation problems of Stelco employees, and we have not used our power arrogantly to just shut the steel industry to get it.

If we had the untrammelled and reckless power that Stelco talked about to the royal commission, if we had used our power arrogantly, we surely would have solved the vacation problem years ago. Let me assure you -- the managers and owners of Stelco are still in charge

What is so wrong, however, so desperately critical as our society faces new problems, and new opportunities, is that this attack on imagined union power and the destruction of collective bargaining which flows from it, is jeopardizing one of the fundamental foundations of our free society.

The union movement was organized over a hundred years ago on this continent to withstand arbitrariness in the workplace. The government has enthroned it -- and made the fickle anti-inflation board the ultimate in lotteries: the fate of 8 million working Canadians and their ability to cope with the economy depends on how the Anti-Inflation Board feels.

Years ago men and women decided they could not endure, and a truly free society could not endure, democracy on the street and dictatorship in the shop. Look at what the collective bargaining system has achieved for working people and for Canada. And you'll see why the union movement is so anxious about what the government and those who support this government policy are doing.

Before there was the Canada Pension there was collective bargaining to guarantee a deferred wage for workers in their retirement. The private pension system is still a necessary ingredient in the protection of retired workers, their spouses and dependents.

Before there was medicare, the union movement bargained to achieve the right to afford to be sick. Before there were minimum wages or controls on hours of work or laws about sex and racial and religious discrimination, the union movement of Canada was pioneering, was organizing, was negotiating to obliterate discrimination so that the husband would not be laid off in favour of the wife, so the father would not be laid off and the son hired, so that the white would not benefit at the expense of the black.

In occupational health, collective bargaining is decades ahead of government and industry. Our union and others were negotiating and trying to negotiate ways to save lives three decades ago. And collective bargaining, that process of giving working people an effective say where they work, has got to be expanded if we are to solve the growing occupational health crisis.

The University of Washington study that one in four workers has an occupational disease could hardly be an overstatement considering the medical authorities behind it. Which management rights are protected when workers are exposed to conditions that warp their health? And yet in eight out of ten provinces and the two territories the union movement is still waiting, struggling, hoping for adequate occupational health laws. We are still waiting for safety committees to be recognized in law so that managements will have to let their employees participate in the protection of life and limb.

And it's this unique participation, this ability to organize and to bargain so that management recognizes our needs that is under attack so widely in our country today.

I was deeply disturbed by the abuse vented on the Toronto teachers -- so much of it carried almost nonchalantly by our newspapers and the other media. What was said about the teachers was very harmful to them and to our children. If there is one group which has shown restraint over the years, surely it's the teachers. One strike should not be reason for hysteria, but rather reason to examine carefully and thoughtfully what has caused these dedicated people to feel as strongly as they do.

Senator Carl Goldenberg is one of those outside the labour movement, but experienced with the Canadian collective bargaining system, who has said how integral collective bargaining rights are to the workings of a free society, and how it is essential to our kind of freedom that the right to withdraw services be protected.

He has pointed out, "Strikes are....the feature of labour-management relations which attract most public attention...Under a totalitarian regime, whether fascist or communist, there is an easy formula: strikes are prohibited."

Some inconvenience is a small price to pay for a system of collective bargaining that has served the country so well. It has involved more people directly in participating in democracy and making freedom real and tangible than anything else I can think of. All around us we are faced with ever more impersonal institutions, bureaucracies and technology. We have to ask -- all of us -- whether our society will put the engines of technology in charge of us or whether we, the people, will run the machines. I hope we have not reached the day when the functioning of institutions, and the efficient running of robot-like machinery is held to be more important than the needs of those whom the machines and the institutions ought to serve.

Our forefathers reached this continent in the name of freedom, to escape dictatorship, to find individual recognition and opportunity. In our complex society, if people are to assert their innate humanity, it is essential that they have some control of the huge machines and institutions of this world. We are all anxious, to say the least, that we not enter the plastic and shuddering, lobotomized world that Aldous Huxley portrayed in Brave New World. It is for these kinds of reasons that free collective bargaining is not just part of democracy, in a very real sense in our industrialized and bureaucratized world, it is democracy. It is participation. It's the way that ordinary citizens have a say in so many of the things that matter most.

In today's world, surely no one group and no single individual can have the self-assurance or the ego to claim to speak for the interests of everyone. What we need today, it seems to me, is more participation, in tangible ways, for everyone. We need more diversity of input and involvement in all kinds of decisions, about politics, jobs, incomes, life styles and environmental questions.

It has frequently been pointed out that there is less industrial strife in Europe than in Canada. The reasons haven't been talked about very much. I would suggest that one major reason is that many unions in Europe are beginning to share the kind of power that is still unthought of in Canada in terms of letting the people most severely affected have a say in their destiny.

In France, some Scandinavian countries and West Germany, the big debate at this moment in the labour-management relations is how many seats on the boards of directors should a company be required to set aside for employees. The counterparts of the men and women in leadership in the Canadian labour movement who are reviled as unpatriotic by our ministers and decried as too powerful by our corporate leaders are members of the boards of the equivalents of Stelco, Falconbridge, Ford, and other corporations in Europe.

I am not suggesting this is what the union movement seeks in Canada. I believe we must solve our problems in our own way and must accommodate our economic system and make it more compatible with our people's needs. But I use the European example to underscore an important point in labour-management and labour-government relations. In those countries, whose low time-loss figures from strikes are the envy of our labour ministers, the labour movement is not a pariah but a full and respected partner in the economy, in planning and implementing economic decisions.

There are no seminars in Sweden, as there are here, advising management how to beat off union organization. A featured speaker at one just last December was the industrial relations director of a company with which we negotiate. If a person charged with such responsibilities is still fighting against the rights of employees to organize and to choose to have a union, we will not have industrial harmony. We will have conflict.

I point to Sweden a good deal because it is a country very much like ours, in terms of industry at least; there are mines, foundries, and chemical and steel industries. In Sweden, because the labour movement is totally accepted as part of the democratic way of life, 80% of the blue-collar workers are union members, and 70% of the white-collar workers and professionals as well. Compare that to Canada, where about 33% of the workers are in unions.

It's time we matured in labour relations in Canada. It's time we accepted the union movement as the only means people have to get a say in their jobs. Let's recognize the union movement in the schools -- so that our children are not indoctrinated with the kind of anachronistic notions about unions that still survive in most history books. Let's have some positive recognition of the labour movement and collective bargaining in obvious public ways.

Let me cite a small, but symbolic, example. I've noticed for years, when I receive mail from my counterparts in other countries, that many of their countries have honoured the labour movement on their postage stamps. Not Canada. There are no stamps celebrating the Canadian Labour Congress, the 100th birthday of the first labour federation in this country,

the heroes of the labour movement, or collective bargaining itself, as the U. S. did on a stamp last year.

Let's have some recognition in the media of how the labour movement and collective bargaining contribute every day to the well-being of everyone in this country.

Members of my own union have a dental clinic in the Yukon, founded credit unions and food co-ops in Manitoba, started a unique program for alcoholic rehabilitation in Toronto and built the first community health centre in Ontario. They were able to do it because they belong to a large union and because they have a sense of deep community spirit. Collective bargaining has enabled them to nurture that spirit, and that's why anything that jeopardizes the union movement's freedom will, indeed must, be resisted.

Now while I feel it is essential public policy to expand and extend collective bargaining, I am too much of a realist not to know that there can be improvements in the system.

One reason we have a lot of strikes in Canada is because we have so many bargaining units. We usually end up with pretty much the same results in most industries and regions. If our energies are not to be used up in piecemeal and endless wrangling to achieve the same accomplishments, we must develop ways to bring managements and unions together in broader bargaining units.

We shouldn't any longer have to quarrel about items like recognizing safety committees, or sharing the results of tests for toxic chemicals and dust and noise with the union. Government and industry should be willingly involved in working much harder to improve grievance and arbitration procedures, so that it doesn't take months to get a decision about a dismissal, or an overtime grievance, or a dispute about promotions; or require too often a too expensive arbitration hearing; or have almost interminable delay increase tension and dissatisfaction.

And, most fundamental of all, we should be finished with the quarrels about union recognition and encourage in every way open and full access to free collective bargaining for all working people in Canada - blue collar, white collar, professional, public, private. Far too often management labour relations have been soured for years by the incredible struggle which recognition required. Of course, much has improved, and the numbers of enlightened employers have grown, but far too often still the battle rages about recognition, instead of the energy and talent being used to develop a sensitive and effective collective bargaining relationship.

In the near future we may well see the limits to growth, we will without question be faced with the needs of humankind around our world more dramatically than ever has been the case before. If the economic pie is not to grow, or is to be part of a new, dynamic and demanding world view, then all the human economic questions - of sharing, and using, and needing, and creating - become incredibly more difficult, and more important. In my view a mature free collective bargaining system will be essential if we are to meet peoples' needs, preserve freedom and permit society to pursue the immense tasks which will confront it.

I would challenge this audience: Who represents the good of the community in the boardroom? Who is the ombudsman for the environment in the executive suite? I can't believe that shareholders of private companies want the people who claim to be the stewards of their investments to put profits first and always and to disregard all the consequences. I don't think shareholders are more or less rational than working people and their unions. Each of us wants respect for our efforts, appreciation for our work. Each of you wants to count, to know your opinion matters. So do members of unions. You want a safer world, without the necessity of war or starvation. So do the unions.

I recalled the other day a perfectly good old Canadian phrase that has somehow fallen out of usage. It's the co-operative commonwealth. To me it still says a lot about how we must organize our human, natural and financial resources.

The labour movement has earned a chief role in the mainstream of the country. And free collective bargaining as the best way to solve the problems of jobs and work deserves the trust and support of all the members of society. Many people are going to have to change their thinking. It's why I was so happy to accept the opportunity to speak directly to the community the Canadian Club represents. I believe you are also concerned that we build a peaceful and decent world and that we do as much as we can in that way as soon as we can.

I am suggesting not in a philosophical way but in concrete and practical terms we can do a lot more if we recognize that people need to feel a sense of achievement and that victories built on the demoralizing and vanquishing of one group or other are not victories at all but merely respites between more conflict. We have to share power, share resources, share wealth and share responsibility. It has always been in the union spirit to do that, ever since the birth of union organization on this continent.

The sooner we recognize the role of the labour movement as essential in a democracy, the sooner we will truly begin to work in the spirit of the first unionists.

The Toronto printers said it well in 1844. The motto they adopted then is a useful guidepost, I believe, for us today,

"United to support, not
combined to injure."