

Pacific Coast Longshoremen Dispute

I wish to conclude my remarks on a very serious note, and I address myself to management. The Canadian people are tired of management which forces the workers to strike. The postal employees and other civil servants should not have to organize themselves in unions. Parliament should be their union; we are their advocates. Surely, parliament does not need a hold-up in our Christmas mail to bring attention to the fact that every government employee in Canada is entitled to a good living wage. This is what encourages people who are not government employees to go on strike. I foresee that if something is not done to give the low paid school teachers and nurses proper wages and living conditions they will be forced to form unions. A hundred years ago labour had very little voice. Parliaments were usually drawn from men of private means. But to day parliament is composed of men who are acquainted with the working people and their problems. We have no right to neglect any longer putting on the statute books of Canada legislation which will protect the little man. This little man has the right to work even though he belongs to a union which, over the years, has improved his working conditions but today may be abusing its powers.

Unless we give this man a secret ballot and give him the right to control his own affairs and his own right to work, we will fail in our important mission here in the house.

● (1:10 p.m.)

Mr. A. B. Patterson (Fraser Valley): Mr. Speaker, there are a few remarks I wish to make in this special debate which has been allowed in order to discuss this question of vital national importance. It is reassuring to know that there is in this house general concern over the situation presently existing on Canada's west coast. Sometimes there is a tendency in that area to feel isolated, to feel that the rest of Canada does not understand our problems or that the rest of Canada does not concern itself too much with our needs. Therefore we appreciate the fact, as I said, that here in this house today there is unanimous and mutual concern at this unfortunate situation which is having such serious effects on the economy in the west and, of course right across the country.

I think we ought to express our appreciation to the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), for his ready agreement that this matter was of sufficient importance to warrant debate if Your Honour saw fit to rule that the requirements of urgency were satisfied. We also

thank Your Honour for recognizing the urgency of this matter by the ruling you gave.

I think it is evident from what has been said in this debate that there is, in fact, a matter of extreme concern facing us at the present time, not only in its effects on the economy of the area on the west coast, but also as something that will have a very detrimental effect on the economy of the entire nation.

In the course of this discussion speakers have pointed out how this situation is affecting various primary producers. My colleague from Okanagan-Revelstoke, who moved this motion, referred in particular to the plight in which the fruitgrowers are finding themselves as a result of their inability to move their fruit to the markets. We all know that this is a perishable product and the situation cannot be allowed to continue for very much longer.

Some of those whose interests are primarily in the prairie provinces have pointed out the effect the situation is having on the grain trade and how the boxcars loaded with grain are now backing right up across the prairies. We all know that for a considerable length of time there has been difficulty moving their grain under ordinary circumstances. Therefore, when a situation such as this arises we can readily understand their additional concern and their desire that this matter be resolved at the earliest possible moment.

In the province of British Columbia, the lumber and wood products industry is one of our major industries. As has been pointed out, companies engaged in this industry are now stating they will have to lay off thousands and thousands of employees if this state of affairs is allowed to persist. So I think in the over-all picture, considering the matter from these points of view, it can be readily seen this is a problem that demands urgent attention and an immediate solution.

There are those in the other allied employee groups, Mr. Speaker, who are also seriously affected by this dispute in which they are not directly involved. I think that we have to consider the effect of this dispute on the entire employment picture on the west coast and in the rest of Canada.

I do not think that recriminations are going to contribute to the solution of this problem. There have been some rather violent recriminations hurled at the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) in the course of this debate. I do not think this will assist in the solution of the problem. We appreciate the fact that the minister does not desire to intervene in a situation