Hon. Mr. Macdonald (Cape Breton): May I ask the honourable Leader a question at this point? On section 5, when you say they could agree to vary it, could the parties also agree that the findings of the commission would not apply to their collective bargaining agreement, in other words, that it be a nullity?

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): I think not. In other words, it is fair to describe the result that would flow from the passing of this bill as compulsory arbitration. I say they have agreed to it and that they agreed to it on June 14, with the rider that they can vary the terms. It is not compulsory arbitration in the sense that once the commissioner makes his findings and these findings are put in a form that can be inserted into a collective agreement that they are fully binding. The parties can still, by agreement between themselves, vary those items. I assume, however, that if they do not agree, then the findings of the commission are final.

Hon. Mr. Haig: That is compulsory arbitration.

Hon. Mr. Rattenbury: But if they do agree, it is not compulsory arbitration.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): We are talking about this as a matter of semantics at the moment. This is compulsory arbitration, certainly, and I think they all agreed they could accept it.

Hon. Mr. Haig: They agreed to do it before they started the arbitration.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): Yes, they did, because the commission cannot start to work before the act is passed. This bill contains the commissioner's terms of reference. There is the rider that even after having heard the findings of the commission they can still, by agreement, vary those terms. But they must agree, and if they do not, then I would assume that the findings of the commission are binding on both parties.

Honourable senators, we have been looking for this legislation for a long time, but the parties have been looking for it since June 14. I think the proposal is a reasonable and fair one, and I commend it to the Senate.

Work has been resumed, the ports have been re-opened. This is a very important consideration at this time, particularly in the St. Lawrence area from where so much of the grain being exported under the huge wheat contracts we have is shipped, and where so much importation is going on in connection with the development of Expo '67. All these elements make this a highly important measure, even though it may be a difficult problem to deal with.

I think I have said as much as I need say in introducing the measure. If honourable senators have any questions they wish to ask I shall do my best to answer them.

Hon. John M. Macdonald: Honourable senators, I do not propose at this hour of the evening or at this stage of the session to take up much of your time in discussing this bill, important though it undoubtedly is. For that reason I do not propose to deal with any of the details of the bill itself.

I object to the bill, and my objection is to the principle of the bill. In many ways this is a very remarkable bill. By this I do not mean that the bill itself or any of the terms are complicated; they are not. But the story behind the events leading up to it gives it an interesting and indeed a fascinating history. The purpose of the bill is to incorporate into a collective bargaining agreement already signed the conclusions to be reached by an industrial inquiry commission, and this to my mind is a most unusual and uncommon procedure. As has been stated, the collective bargaining agreement has been signed since June 14 last between the Shipping Federation of Canada and six locals of the International Longshoremen's Association.

Now, in order to understand this bill some reference must be made to the conference which took place between the Shipping Federation and the representatives of the International Longshoremen's Association aided, assisted, mediated, and perhaps confused by, I suppose, the most distinguished group of volunteer mediators in the history of industrial arbitration in Canada. We had the Prime Minister, the Minister of Labour, and four other cabinet ministers along with the Deputy Minister of Labour, his senior officials, and at least one parliamentary secretary. These all assisted in the mediation of this industrial dispute. Now whether or not this V.I.P. intervention helped or only added some confusion to an already difficult situation, I do not know. Just what was agreed upon or indeed stated at these conferences is difficult to determine. Misunderstandings have arisen; recollections of what took place differ. However, one thing would seem clear: it was understood that the Government would appoint an industrial inquiry commission. That much is clear, but that is about all that is clear.