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PROBLEMS OF LABOUR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

The following are excerpts from an address by Mr. John R. Nicholson, the Minister of Labour, to the Canadian Association of Purchasing Agents, Toronto, on February 8:

...Most of the difficulties in labour relations during 1966 arose out of strikes or threatened work stoppages. Most of our difficulties were connected with industrial disputes in the transportation field.... It is this kind of dispute that makes the headlines. This is natural enough because the effects of even short transportation tie-ups can be crippling, very crippling, in a country such as Canada, where distances are great and where we are so dependent on transportation for our well-being. A work stoppage in this sensitive area quickly becomes a national emergency and often can be handled only by emergency measures.

During 1966, several factors combined to create the many difficult and complex problems we had to face....A number of important collective agreements were due to be negotiated, agreements in the inter-provincial and international trucking field, agreements with both major railways involving well over 100,000 employees, agreements with several of our airlines, agreements with the longshoremen on both coasts, agreements in the telecommunication field, all of which had to be renegotiated during this year of crises.

Secondly, Canada has been enjoying one of the most prosperous periods in its history. Happily, in spite of our difficulties, this prosperity still continues. It is in times of expectation and optimism, however, that labour quite naturally may be expected to seek their share of the general prosperity. To me

it is entirely logical for our work force to try to advance their interest when times are good.

The third factor, which is becoming increasingly important and which, in the eyes of many, is perhaps the most important of all, concerns job security in the face of technological change. More and more, this third factor is occupying a larger place in industrial relations.

A VOICE FOR LABOUR

There is no stopping any technological change. It would be most unwise for labour or anyone else to attempt to do so. An exporting nation such as Canada must take advantage of new developments to remain competitive. Organized labour recognized this, but, of late, their spokesmen have made it clear that these changes will not come about at the expense of the workers and their families. Labour today is asking that they have a voice in a matter which affects them so deeply....

Labour insistence, however, about job security in the face of the changes to which I have referred has set the scene for some really tough bargaining by both labour and management, bargaining that led to many of the strikes and threats of strikes that persisted from January to December 1966. The work stoppages were costly, very costly, and some of them posed such grave threats to the national economy that they just could not be allowed to continue.

LONGSHOREMEN'S STRIKE

In the case of the strike of the longshoremen in the three St. Lawrence ports and the strike of railway workers, Parliament was forced to step in where there