

Private Members' Business

Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia is absolutely wrong when he proposes that the right to strike be taken away from all grain handlers in this country.

Let me quote what Mr. Daniher has to say:

The truth of the matter—

I am quoting to his words.

—is Thunder Bay grain elevators have been involved in only two labour disputes in the past 23 years. Both disputes amounted to only a 7-week work stoppage in total. After the 17-day dispute of 1981 the Thunder Bay grain industry accounted for those missed days by moving as much grain through the port in a 4-day period than was moved through other ports the entire year. Again after the labour dispute of 1986, similar records were set. This bill would destroy that type of relationship between the union and the companies.

This bill would make it impossible for the parties to have an effective, productive relationship because the parties wouldn't be allowed to settle their differences and reach an agreement both the union and management could claim as their own during the tenure and length of time of the contract.

Mr. Daniher goes on to say:

It's important that both parties be put to the strict test. If they want to retain or acquire a certain right, is it important enough to go the distance for it? In most cases, due to a relationship developed through many years of collective bargaining, both parties rally to find a compromise or fair and equitable solution to the problem rather than shutting down the industry.

The best result a binding conciliation board could give would be sometimes the result that both parties do not agree to. The imposed settlement would ultimately be made by someone whose job would be not to create a fair, productive, harmonious workplace but whose job it would be to impose a settlement without regard to the effects on the relationship between the parties. The union and the companies would be forced to accept piecemeal solutions versus real, workable solutions hammered out at the negotiating table where labour contracts should be settled.

A bill such as the one before the House today would do nothing but harm the grain industry and the country as a whole. If such a bill were passed, does that mean there should be a bill to ensure the farmers deliver their product not when the price is most advantageous but when it is dictated for the farmers to do so.

This bill that is before the House, although it is alluded to help the farmer, would be detrimental to the farmer. That is the very case they find themselves in

today in the west when they cannot get the price that is needed for a tonne of grain. They would be forced, if that bill were passed, to submit their grain for sale when the prices were at a most disadvantageous stage.

The grain industries have been shut down a hundred times longer in our history due to agricultural policies, due to what the United States is doing with respect to labour disputes involving grain elevators, not what is happening in Canada.

Broken bridges, canal walls falling in, the Canadian Wheat Board's marketing policy, surely these areas must be of greater concern to the people who are involved in the very intricate business of growing and selling wheat in this country than destroying the harmonious productive industrial relations climate that exists between the elevators and the people in the port of Thunder Bay and those involved in the elevator industry.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude, and I know my time is running short. What we are talking about in this bill that is presented by this member and is before this House today is a fundamental freedom. We almost challenge the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this country. It goes without saying that one of the fundamental freedoms that we have had is the freedom of association, freedom of speech in this country, and we hold that inalienable.

What this member is proposing today is taking away a fundamental right of our workers in this country that they fought so many years to get, that is the right to withdraw their services if they cannot get the deal that they think they should be getting. That is just not acceptable to this party, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to deal with a statement made by the member for Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia—that is almost as bad as Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Mr. Speaker—with respect to his motion to have this matter go to committee.

• (1730)

I point out that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections is chaired by one of his members. The majority of members on that particular committee are members of the Progressive Conservative Party who are on that particular committee. They have looked at all matters that are drawn to come before the committee