

*Labour Conditions*

Well, Mr. Speaker, so far as I am concerned this assumption that was made on that day, on the strength of the minister's announcement that the inquiry commission was to follow the processes of free collective bargaining, continued until the minister burst this bombshell in the house. In view of statements which have been made persistently by members of the government and their supporters on that side of the house, I must say that it came as a great shock to me that this kind of action would be taken, particularly with the knowledge we have of the background of some of the members of this present government.

However, Mr. Speaker, I think all of us recognize that at the present time we are in the midst of a rather crucial situation within our economy, and that it is a responsibility of all members of the house to give some serious thought to just in what direction we should move, and what is the role of parliament and of government in the whole field of collective bargaining with particular reference to the questions involved in this period of rapid technological change. My own observation is that this question is at the root of most of the disputes which have been developing in recent times. I have had some experience of first hand participation in industrial warfare. So far as I am concerned it is a nasty, messy, rather inefficient way of arriving at a settlement of the issues which are involved.

There is a responsibility on parliament and on government to seek to find techniques which will eliminate the necessity in the minds of those in the industrial field, both on the side of management and on the side of the workers, to resort to this kind of action. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this piece of legislation, which in my view has been hasty and ill conceived, will open up a real Pandora's box in this field, if it is allowed to receive the consent of this house for its passage. This will set a precedent, if it is passed, which some of the members of the present government certainly will live to regret. I would join with others who have spoken to ask the government to reconsider this request that they have placed before the house, no matter what may have been the commitments made by some of the members of this government in the heat of the moment, and indeed by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) who, perhaps somewhat understandably in view of the great number of hours during which he was holding meetings, was lost among the trees in what admittedly was a very difficult and

complex situation, and one which in many ways did involve the vital interests of the nation.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to recall to the attention of members of the house some remarks the minister made when he was introducing in the house in the month of May the estimates of the department for which he has responsibility. On May 27, as will be found at page 5631 of *Hansard* the minister is recorded as saying the following—and I am going to quote him at some little length because I believe what he had to say on that occasion is very relevant to the matter we now have before us:

Before discussing even briefly the activities of the Department of Labour, having in mind the field of responsibilities that remain with it since January 1, I think it might be well if I made a very short statement about the general economic situation we have in Canada today, and more particularly about those aspects of this general economic situation which are of special interest to Canadian workers and employers.

I would not be frank if I did not say to this committee that I, as minister, and my department, have been plagued with a flood of disastrous strikes over the past few weeks. These strikes all seriously threaten the Canadian economy, and I urge all members of this house, regardless of party, to apply their minds to this serious situation which threatens our basic economy. We should be applying our minds in an attempt to find some corrective formula or solution which will prevent matters from getting completely out of hand.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to say I agree wholeheartedly with that part of the statement the minister made when he was introducing his estimates. Then he goes on to refer to the situation in the province of British Columbia from which both he and I come. A little later on he makes reference to the more immediate situation which is involved in the question before us:

We are faced with the situations that have been referred to in the last week, namely the dock strike in Montreal, the threatened strike in Air Canada, the railway problems and others which are particularly serious. I really think that we should apply our minds in an attempt to find some solution to this extremely grave situation.

I have not been in this office long enough to be able to say whether the solution lies in the establishment of arbitration or of labour courts, such as those that have been set up in Australia and other countries of the world. The answer may lie in that kind of action because, while they have had divided success, on the whole they have been successful. I throw that idea out as something that merits the serious consideration of all members of this house and of all Canadians.

• (9:00 p.m.)

On May 27 the minister said he had not been in office long enough to be able to say

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