

*Government Orders*

We would submit again, along with many of the other parties involved, that it is important in order to not only get a settlement, but to get a settlement that hopefully will allow the two parties in Thunder Bay to live together in a constructive relationship for a significant period to come. The parties most directly involved should have direct representation in the arbitration process.

It just seems like common sense to me. We recognize that there are across this country, not many but a number of individuals with some experience as single arbitrators who have done yeoman service and have shown a great proclivity to gain a deep understanding, in relatively short periods of time, of some of the specifics involved in the various disputes that they have been called upon to intervene in. It is, in an area of our economy that is so sensitive and so important to the needs of so many, maybe asking too much to expect any single person, no matter how efficient or how experienced, to be able to exercise the wisdom of Solomon.

We would again just ask the government to reconsider and give very, very special and sensitive attention to that request. We think the request has obvious merit and we think that many people across the country, even the farmers directly or indirectly affected by the dispute, would understand that as well. If it takes just a little bit longer in order to come up with the appropriate personnel, and we cannot really see why it should, I think everyone would be understanding and appreciative of it.

We also understand that pensions have been one of the major issues in dispute, and not really even in dispute so much as that the employer, for whatever reason, has refused to place those matters on the table.

In an industry which has seen a great number of layoffs and a great deal of insecurity over the period of the past few years and the past few months, I think we have to be sensitive to the likelihood that a large number of those employees and the community that surrounds them are going to feel that matters relating to retirement, early retirement and the kind of pensions which their members who may find themselves among the victims of layoffs again in the near future must have, are of great great priority, not only personal priority but community priority. They want to see that there is some stability as changes continue to take place.

We would hope again that the government, however this process evolves, will attempt to make clear to those who are going to be involved in the mediation-arbitration that they are advised to take the pension issue very seriously, not to tell them how to deal with it, but that it must be dealt with.

The whole matter of compulsory settlement is one that we certainly do not relish having to deal with. However, as a government and as a party that has formed governments in a number of provincial jurisdictions, and in the near future will likely do so again, we have found it necessary from time to time in a given public interest dispute to recognize that there are limits to freedom when a vital public interest is involved.

• (1240)

While it is a question of principle, we have always in the past been quite prepared to deal with the realities of the situation. We will be willing to deal with those again today, or whenever the time finally comes for a decision. The events of the past few weeks in this place have seen another major intervention by the government in imposing a settlement on the Public Service Alliance and the employees of the federal government. I think almost all Canadians, no matter which side of the debate they were on, thought this was unjust. This has left a certain atmosphere among many in the work force across Canada, both public and private, that there is perhaps too quick and ready a proclivity on the part of this government to move to deny people certain basic fundamental rights and freedoms in the name of some broad public interest. This dispute may more readily lend itself to a resolution that will perhaps find a broader measure of agreement than did the previous Public Service dispute. Our proclivity to move quickly to impinge on those freedoms leaves a bad taste. It makes it much more likely in the future that this government will face great difficulty, even in instances in which it may be quite justified, to attempt to gain public or parliamentary support for its actions.

If we cry wolf too often, people are not going to answer. I think the government ought to take a very close look at its own record in this regard and the fairness of the measures that it does impose when it does decide that measures must be imposed.