

*West Coast Ports Operations Act*

economic situation, are talking of even further lay-offs and shutdowns.

Perhaps the most important consequence, however, is the long-term damage being done to the reputation of Canada's west coast ports and the ability of Canada as a major world trading partner to meet its export commitments. As I indicated earlier, prior to the lockout of union members by the Employers' Association, twelve major shipping consortia had already begun to divert general cargo carriers to the Port of Seattle, Vancouver's major competitor for Pacific container traffic.

I do not think any Hon. Member will deny that a critical and urgent situation exists in western Canada as a direct result of this cessation of longshoring operations in the west coast ports. Damage to the economy of Canada is readily evident and will mount at an increasing rate the longer the ports are closed.

The Bill before Hon. Members today, namely the West Coast Ports Operations Act, 1982, orders the immediate resumption of longshoring and related operations in the west coast ports and further provides that, if a settlement is not achieved through direct negotiations between the parties, the employees covered by the bargaining relationship will be brought under the provisions of the Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act. I emphasize that the first order of business contained in this legislation is to bring about an immediate resumption of the vital shipping operations on Canada's west coast, and this will come about upon the coming into force of this piece of legislation. The inclusion of the west coast longshoremen under the Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act is to come about on a day to be fixed by proclamation, and as I have suggested, the Government is prepared to allow the parties one final opportunity, over the next five days, to exhibit the faith which they place in the free collective bargaining process and in doing so remove the need for the Government to proclaim Section 4 of this particular Bill.

I am sure that there are some Hon. Members of this House who would consider this piece of legislation currently before them as a Draconian measure. However, I suggest to those Hon. Members who possess such sentiments that neither they nor the parties to the dispute should be surprised by the action now being taken by the Government. It is not without warning.

In his report, the Conciliation Commissioner made the following observation:

I consider that the existence of high unemployment and low national productivity has generated a public mood that would find a disruption of our ports intolerable. I consider it likely that national policy would reflect that mood and that intervention would be swift in any dispute that tied up the waterfront.

**Mr. Hope** further warned the parties:

I pointed out in particular that national policy now anticipates a diminished expectation in wage negotiations with guidelines recommending increases limited to six per cent and five per cent over the next two years.

I have recommended wage increases that exceed those guidelines. I made those recommendations in response to the move by the Employers to achieve significant concessions from the Union in terms of working conditions and job jurisdiction. I speak particularly of the training of casual employees, the expansion of container traffic, the introduction of continuous operations, the control of regular work force rotation and telephone dispatch. The Union has

made considerable concessions in those areas but only in the expectation of acceptance of its wage package and the introduction of a day shift premium. I consider it essential that those concessions be recognized in my recommendation as to wages. The Union proposal is beyond reasonable expectations in the current climate but significant recognition must be given to what the Union is being asked to accept in other aspects of the Agreement.

In addressing the issue of intervention I emphasized the possibility, if not the probability, that the guidelines would be imposed to the detriment of the self-interest of both parties. In the application of the guidelines one would anticipate maintenance of the status quo on all issues except wages with wages limited to six per cent and five per cent for the guideline period.

I repeat, I did not purport to speak on behalf of the Government, simply to point out the obvious, that the restraint program of six per cent and five per cent with no change in other terms and conditions was a possible result of any imposed settlement. My purpose was to urge the parties to continue to negotiate a settlement within the industrial relations milieu as the surest means of achieving their goals in some form of acceptable compromise.

This government has faced up to its responsibility by introducing this legislation which will bring about an immediate resumption of longshoring activities in Canada's west coast ports. The parties now have until midnight, November 8, again to reflect on the wisdom of the Commissioner's report and demonstrate, through action rather than rhetoric, that collective bargaining does work and, if left to their own devices, they can reach a collective agreement.

In closing, I ask Hon. Members for an early and speedy passage of the legislation, to bring about resumption of shipping operations and prod the parties to get on with the negotiation of a new collective agreement.

**Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale):** Mr. Speaker, despite the long and very detailed presentation of the Minister with respect to the background to this Bill, it might be useful if I pointed out at the outset that the Bill is a fairly simple one in terms of what it intends this House to do.

I think the two important principles involved are easily understood. The first principle or issue concerns whether or not the Government should intervene to restore confidence on the west coast. That is the first issue, the first question.

Since Parliament opened a week ago, our party has been pleading with the Government to bring in a bill to do just that. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker; getting the work going again on the west coast is of fundamental importance to the whole of the country, not merely the west coast. It impacts on farmers, railways workers, on the whole of the general economy. Indeed, it seems to us that this should have been done long before today, so we support this Bill in relation to ending the work stoppage and getting the port back to work by the end of today.

● (1540)

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, there is a second issue. The first is whether or not the Government should intervene. We want the Government to intervene. The second is the method and mode, the way in which the Government has chosen to intervene. That we have some considerable quarrel with.