

Grain Handlers' Strike

establish. The tendency will be for the normal processes of negotiation to be regarded as little more than formal preliminaries to an appeal to the highest authority. No matter whether we consider the assessment of the Economic Council or the observations of the *Globe and Mail*, the message is clear. The government's attitude in this dispute has been totally irresponsible and should be condemned. The government has completely disregarded the conclusion of the Economic Council of Canada, to the detriment of this country's economic well-being.

In my view, the repercussions of the original Seaway settlement were most inflationary; and those repercussions have been felt ever since at the bargaining table in contract negotiations. Furthermore, it has become increasingly apparent that since the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) indicated that the suggestions contained in the Perry report would be implemented, a climate has been created which has become intolerable. The proposed settlement, in every way, is comparable to the Seaway settlement, if one considers the implications of repercussion, publicity, government involvement and spin-off. On the basis of past examples it is not difficult to prophesy the effect of a 48 per cent or a 61 per cent award on our economy because our rate of inflation is now running at 11 per cent.

The spin-off will be staggering. It is felt that the spin-off from the proposed award will affect between 11,000 and 12,000 workers, including 1,500 grain handlers at Thunder Bay, 3,200 longshoremen in British Columbia—the minister will run into trouble on that settlement—3,500 managers of grain elevators throughout the west and 260 grain inspectors employed by the Canadian Grain Commission, a government agency. All these men will be able to claim that their jobs and responsibilities are just as important as those of the grain handlers and that they are entitled to an equal award. What will the Minister of Labour say to them?

Let me now turn to a speech the minister delivered to the western region of the International Woodworkers of America, in Vancouver, as reported in the *Globe and Mail* of September 28, 1974. Does the minister not remember that speech? If he does not, I will remind him of it. He spoke of catch-up. The minister's theory of catch-up is interesting. He said, as reported, that catching up has come to mean catching up with other unions as much as with the cost of living. Catch-up agreements must in no way be viewed as precedents for other groups with no legitimate catching up to be done.

You are not that naive, are you, Mr. Minister? Of course, Mr. Speaker, I say that through you. I am not complaining about the person who wrote the speech, but the minister should have read it before he delivered it. That statement was made after the minister and his cohorts blessed the Perry report, thereby attempting to cover up the awful mess the government had got itself into previously by setting a precedent.

I say here and now that the rationale of the minister's remarks will not be accepted. I say to the minister that his type of thinking is not acceptable. The fat is in the fire. The minister is destroying the collective bargaining process as we know it, and he is in trouble. His troubles are so large that they defy the imagination. He will find it very

[Mr. Alexander.]

difficult, if not impossible, to extricate himself. Of course, I say all this in a friendly way. The minister is a friend of mine; he comes from the Hamilton area. We are trying to do our best. The minister has been misguided, and for that I extend him my sympathy. I remind the House that the Minister of Labour said that this is a hell of a time for anyone to be minister of labour. I agree. But the minister is the author of his own misfortunes and will have to suffer the consequences. What will those consequences be?

Let us talk about the Vancouver grain inspectors. When the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) was asked a question about these inspectors earlier, he gave the stock answer, "Oh, well, we are negotiating and it would be irresponsible to say something concrete at this time." That was the gist of his words. I do not think I am revealing confidences in making this further submission. I am talking about the Vancouver grain inspectors. I am informed by an authoritative source that the government has a double standard, in that it has endorsed the Perry report involving increases of about 65 per cent and accepted a settlement for officers and deck hands of 75 per cent, but has offered only about 11 per cent to the inspectors, over 27 months. Is my suggestion regarding officers and engineers not correct? Do you think, Mr. Speaker, that others will not seek the same sort of settlement?

Let me point out, while I am on the subject, that the Minister of Labour in the past has been quoted as saying that workers working side by side and doing the same job should earn the same money. What manner of hanky-panky are we witnessing. The government is offering one group of workers about 11 per cent over two years and offering others who work side by side with them between 48 and 61 per cent. Is that what you call equal pay for equal work? Is that what we mean by the just society? As I have said, the minister will run into trouble.

My second point is this. The Vancouver grain inspectors have endorsed the Perry report as a fair criterion for the settlement of their current dispute. The minister must know the effect of what he is saying. He must believe in what he says.

My third point is this. Withdrawal of the services of Canadian grain inspectors would shut off movement of grain through the port of Vancouver. How does that apply to the minister's catch-up theory? I agree, this is one hell of a time for one to be Minister of Labour, and things are just starting to pop. These things are happening in our country because of this government's incompetence.

My last point is this. Treasury Board's offer is completely unacceptable and completely irrational. Where do we go from here? My points have concerned the grain inspectors. The minister may think that catch-up does not apply to everybody. He is wrong: it does. So much for the minister's argument about catch-up. There can be little doubt about the eventual effect on the grain industry, in negotiations and settlements, of the government's intervention in this situation. How did the government get into this mess? It was easy.

An hon. Member: They have a talent for it.

Mr. Alexander: As my hon. friend says, they have a talent for it. Dr. Perry, when he submitted his report to the Minister of Labour, made clear that it was only a