

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 24, 1967

The house met at 11 a.m.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Fifth and sixth reports of standing committee on transport and communications—Mr. Macaluso.

[Translation]

SIXTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. H. E. Gray (Essex West): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the sixth report of the standing committee on finance, trade and economic affairs, in which we are referring to the house Bill No. S-20, respecting the Co-operative Trust Company Limited. As usual, this report has been prepared in English and French.

[Editor's note: Text of the foregoing reports appear in today's Votes and Proceedings.]

SHIPPING

LABOUR DISPUTE AT MONTREAL—MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 26

Hon. Théogène Ricard (Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to move the adjournment of the house under standing order 26, in order to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the stoppage of activities in the port of Montreal, the consequences of which threatens to seriously affect our exports and to interfere with our economy, particularly in view of the dangerous situation brought about by the statement made yesterday by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson), when he said that the government declines all responsibility concerning this very important matter.

Mr. Speaker, I have here a copy of the motion in French and in English.

Mr. Speaker: Would the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot please comment on the urgency of the debate?

Mr. Ricard: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I placed this matter before the house today because we will not have the opportunity to discuss it in

the near future. I do not intend to dwell on the urgency of debate at any length, but I know it will not be difficult to win the consent of Your Honour to allow the matter to be discussed immediately.

Mr. Speaker, there are numerous reasons to justify a debate on the matter today. Right now, there are huge quantities of fruits and vegetables on the docks of Montreal harbour which are awaiting shipment to England, and unless immediate steps are taken, they will be a total loss. Their value is roughly the same, namely, \$500,000, so that \$1 million worth of fruits are now stocked in warehouses outside Montreal, there are also large quantities of fruits now in freight cars, and these are in serious danger of being utterly spoiled, apart from creating problems for the railways.

As I said a few moments ago, huge losses will surely result if this situation is allowed to continue even for a short while. Moreover, it should be considered that 3,000 workers, at least, are thus left without work for an indefinite period, and these people increase the already large number of unemployed in the Montreal area.

● (11:10 a.m.)

It's also to be expected, Mr. Speaker, that the other ports on the St. Lawrence will, sooner or later, be affected by this situation, unless the present government and the Minister of Labour in particular decide to accept their responsibilities and take the necessary steps to remedy the situation.

In the long run, considerable damage may result. The reputation of Montreal harbour is sure to suffer abroad because of those delays. There are ships now being rerouted away from Montreal, because the shipping companies feel that they would stand to lose money and they cannot afford any further losses.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, and for many others, I think that we should immediately adjourn the business of the house to deal with this matter.

The government and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) certainly cannot plead that they were not aware of the facts because, for two weeks already, useless and futile discussions have been going on