

where the port is completely shut down to shipments including grain shipments from the Prairies is a very serious one. It is one that has been before the Government since January 1 when the old collective bargaining agreement ran out. Somehow or other, this time has been spent getting to the point where legislation of the lock-out by the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association is being called for.

The problem with regard to container shipments is even older than this problem. I understand that this issue has been before the parties concerned for some 16 years. In any event, the port has been shut down due to the container issue and of course all parts of the port are shut down even though container shipments make up a very small portion of the total shipments that go through the port. In fact, I believe that between seven million and eight million tonnes of general cargo have been handled at the Port of Vancouver since 1977 but only 12 per cent to 15 per cent of the total was containerized. It is a relatively small portion of the port's activity.

As illustrated today by the problems of the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. MacKay), the Government is governing from crisis to crisis. In fact, this particular crisis was not a crisis at all last spring, last summer or even this fall. It is now, however. The need for emergency legislation was telegraphed to us over the weekend by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux).

It is interesting that these issues are left to fester for so long by the Government. There was a strike at the Port of Thunder Bay beginning September 1. That went on until early October. The Government took no action, even though we are facing the worst crisis in history in the grain-handling industry, until early in October. When the Government did get around to appointing a mediator, Mr. William Kelly, one of the most distinguished mediators in Canada, the strike was resolved in a matter of five or six days.

If a strike like that could have been resolved in five or six days, why did the Government wait a month to do so? Of course, that is the same question we are asking today. Why did the Government wait for nine and a half months to bring this legislation before the House?

• (1700)

In any event, we have to deal with the situation as we see it today. The Bill provides for the legislation of a conciliator's report. The report was completed in early September by the Conciliation Commissioner, Mr. Larson. That report makes provision for a long list of outstanding issues in the negotiation including wages, deep-sea ship gangs, bulk terminals, welfare plan, pension plan, automation protection, and hours of work. It also contains the contentious report on container shipments and the handling of it. The original Conciliation Commissioner, Mr. Dalton Larson, in his report of September 3 provided for the removal of the container clause, Article 26.05, on the condition that the B.C. Maritime Employers Association guarantees that the number of hours available to be worked on containers be fixed at 725,000 hours per year. Any shortfall

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was to be paid at straight time rates to trustees for the benefit of active members on the basis of work opportunities lost. This guarantee is to continue indefinitely. That is the clause which was not acceptable to the parties concerned. It is proposed that it be sent to a labour conciliation inquiry under the labour legislation and authorized by this Bill.

As we look through this legislation we see a number of concerns. It is not a precedent for a conciliation report to be authorized by legislation. This in fact has been done previously, I believe in 1975 in the Montreal strike, and also again in 1968 in the western grain industrial dispute. We do have a precedent for this.

The concern with this legislation is twofold. One relates to Clause 7, the Industrial Inquiry Commission. This commission would be set up by the Minister. It is provided in Clause 7(1) that he may establish this commission. However, that is where the dispute comes in. The union believes that it will lose some 300 jobs if that container shipment clause is removed because of the provisions provided in it. The B.C. Maritime Employers Association is arguing that if that container clause is removed, some 80,000 additional containers will be handled by the Port of British Columbia. There is great uncertainty on both sides of this industrial dispute. When we get to the clause in the committee stage we will be recommending that the Government deal with the provisions in the Bill now. Under Clause 7(1) it states:

On the coming into force of this Act, the Minister shall refer the matter of the container provision set out in article 26.05 of the collective agreement to which this Act applies and such other matters related to that provision as the Minister deems appropriate—

We will be suggesting that the Government include provisions for job security, development of the Port of Vancouver, rail facilities, and improvement of the competitive position of the port. The employers are not agreeing to take this clause out of the collective bargaining agreement, but if this legislation does that for them, then what they are concerned about is the loss of jobs. The employers' associations are saying: "Take it out. We will bring in 80,000 additional containers a year. That will create more jobs in the Port of Vancouver". But you cannot necessarily handle 80,000 more containers in the Port of Vancouver. There is the question of the efficiency and the operation of the port. There is the question of the development of business. There is the question of job security. We want to see some provision in the legislation in that regard.

In the Western Grain Transportation Act there is provision for improvements to the port and the railway facilities both by CN and by CPR in the Port of Vancouver. Yet the Government has not acted on that, even though the former Minister of Transport is now the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski), of whom they are all terrified of. Still they have not acted and put in place those additional facilities. So it is not certain whether the B.C. Maritime Employers Association can actually put in place those additional jobs and handle those additional containers.