

Labour Dispute

this, he should tell them they can take his job and give it to somebody else.

The grain issue in respect of this strike situation is as phony as a three-dollar bill. There are other reasons why the government feels it has to legislate and other reasons why members of parliament feel we are now faced with a situation in respect of which we have to do something; but as far as I am concerned those reasons have nothing to do with grain movement. The private grain trade is the fly in the ointment in respect of this whole issue of grain movement and the supply of feed grain in the province of Quebec. I hope this situation will teach the government a lesson. I hope it will show them how effectively they have allowed themselves to be prevented from doing something toward minimizing the impact of this strike on the public.

We submit this legislation must be changed so it is not unfair to the longshoremen. Let me suggest to the minister that unless I am incorrect in my understanding of the Gold commission report and the bill, surely he does not want to proceed with the implementation of the Gold report in respect of job security. While I agree it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for us in a matter of hours to come up with a specific alternate solution, I submit that this legislation should read the same as the legislation which put the dock workers back to work at the port of Vancouver.

This legislation should appoint an arbitrator to go into the whole matter of job security and his decision should be binding on both sides. That certainly could not be worse than what is in this legislation or what is in the Gold report. Surely, after examining both sides and examining carefully what Judge Gold had to say, the arbitrator could come up with something better than a differential between the ports of Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec City. That is just intolerable. I am sure the minister would agree that to require the men in the other two ports to work with much less secure positions than those in the port of Montreal is intrinsically unfair, and I would be surprised if he wanted that particular provision in this legislation. I hope that in the next hour or two he can persuade his colleagues in government to amend the legislation so that it is not necessary for us on the opposition side to do it.

Failing that, and if the legislation as it now stands is passed, then mark my words: if you think you have a mess now in these three ports, just wait a few more months. Employees at the low end of the scale will not stand for this, and I suspect that if we were in that situation we would take the same position.

This brings me to the point on which I should like to conclude. I understand and sympathize with the hon. member for Vancouver South—we all do—when he says there must be a better way of settling industrial disputes and providing a mechanism or a system which sets out what is and what is not an essential service. I defy anyone to come up with a list in that regard which would receive significant acceptance in our society by both the employer and the employee. We in the New Democratic Party submit that if you wish to obtain ready acceptance on the part of the great majority of people, you need an incomes policy that does not pick on those at the lower end of the

[Mr. Benjamin.]

scale but starts at the top when it comes to showing restraint.

The other day I read some material which suggested that a family consisting of a husband, a wife and two or three children in the city of Toronto, with only one car and an average home, hoping that one or two of those children would go to university, could not expect to make it on less than \$15,000 a year. But the minister and the government tell people on wages of \$7,000, \$8,000, \$9,000 and \$10,000 a year what they are going to get, or to show restraint while those on high incomes continue to do well. This legislation, I submit, will aggravate disparities in the longshoremen's group at these three ports. If you expect that they will hold still, stand up and say, "Aye, aye" to the Minister of Labour and the Parliament of Canada, that will not be the case.

● (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Would the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) allow a question?

Mr. Benjamin: Certainly.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, when I was talking about gross incomes in excess of \$12,000 under this legislation, I was referring to what the guarantee worked out to; I was not talking about the average earnings at these ports. If the hon. member wishes to talk about the average earnings, I would ask if he is aware of the distinction. The average earnings are substantially higher than the guarantee in respect of straight time.

Mr. Benjamin: I appreciate that. I was talking about the minimum, because the overtime earnings under the old agreement would be, on average, higher than the minimum. But now, under this legislation, the job security provisions provide that in Montreal the hours of overtime will be deducted from the guaranteed 1,600 hours. This may not hurt the Montreal people too much, but those in Quebec City whose guarantee is only 1,400 hours in the Gold report already had 1,480 hours guaranteed under their old agreement.

The situation is even worse in Three Rivers. Does the minister think the men working in Quebec City will be happy when they see what is happening to them, compared to the people in Montreal? This situation will apply even more so in respect of Three Rivers compared to Quebec City and Montreal. If I understand the legislation correctly and the guaranteed number of hours of work, many of these men will find themselves in a bad situation at the end of the year when they have "X" number of hours overtime deducted from the guarantee of 1,400 hours. They could even find themselves in the position of having to repay some money or having their holiday pay money held back in the amount that is in excess of the guarantee.

If I am mistaken in this, I hope the minister will explain it in the committee. I do not think I am mistaken because I have not heard any response; but if I am, I hope we will have a more detailed explanation. If I am correct, then surely the minister can agree to do no less than was done in the case of the Vancouver port strike settlement and