

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***THUNDER BAY GRAIN HANDLING OPERATIONS ACT**

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of Labour) moved that Bill C-37, an act to provide for the resumption and continuance of grain handling operations at Thunder Bay, Ontario be read the second time, and by unanimous consent, referred to Committee of the Whole.

He said: Madam Speaker, I think that most hon. members do share my feelings that collective bargaining, for the most part, serves the public interest in this country and serves it well. The federal industrial relations system embodied in Part I of the Canada Labour Code has proven to be an effective vehicle for the resolution of labour disputes over the years. The vast majority of negotiations have been resolved without resort to strike or lock-out activity. However, it is equally part of the collective bargaining process to include strike or lock-out action.

Such is the case, Madam Speaker, in the current dispute involving the Lakehead Terminal Elevators Association, representing Cargill Limited, Manitoba Pool Elevators, Parrish and Heimbecker Limited, Richardson Terminals Limited, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and United Grain Growers Limited on the one hand and on the other hand the Transportation Communications International Union, Lodge 650, representing some 900 grain handlers in the port of Thunder Bay.

Unfortunately the parties have been unable to reach agreement on certain issues in their attempt to renew the collective agreements covering employees of the six grain companies having terminal elevator operations in the port.

[Translation]

I should point out, Madam Speaker, that this dispute involves parties that have demonstrated the ability to resolve their differences in the past with relatively little disruption to the Canadian economy. There have only been three strikes of Thunder Bay grain handlers in the past twenty-five years and, during that same period,

eight other bargaining rounds were settled without resort to work stoppage action.

The previous contract negotiations were settled at the direct bargaining stage following the provision of conciliation officer assistance. This occasion marks the first time that legislative intervention has been required to terminate a work stoppage in the grain handling industry at Thunder Bay and bring about a resumption in the flow of export grain through the port.

[English]

The current dispute involves negotiations to renew the previous collective agreement between the two parties which expired on January 31, 1991. The parties did meet in direct negotiations on several occasions between January and May 1991 in an effort to arrive at a contract. Despite their efforts, the two sides were unable to reach agreement and a conciliation officer from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service of Labour Canada was appointed on June 17, 1991 to assist the parties in resolving their differences.

Meetings with the conciliation officer were held during the months of July and August. Even with the provision of third party assistance, the association and the union were unable to find common ground to settle the dispute.

Following the receipt of the report of the conciliation officer and a review of the status of the dispute, I decided not to appoint a conciliation commissioner or establish a conciliation board.

• (1100)

The collective bargaining process provided for under Part I of the Canada Labour Code places the onus for reaching a resolution squarely on the shoulders of the parties to the dispute.

By declining to provide further assistance to the parties at this particular stage of the negotiations, I was in fact conveying the message that the parties ought to have been able to resolve the outstanding disputes themselves in a short timeframe.

It was my view that the appointment of a conciliation commissioner would have served only to protract the process, entrench the parties in their positions and delay the ultimate conclusion of a new collective bargaining agreement.