

Labour Conditions

● (Midnight)

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, the purpose of this motion was to bring to the attention of the House the fact that the press reports that the Canadian Labour Congress, which represents almost two million workers in Canada, is considering withdrawing its representatives from a number of government-labour-management committees which have been set up over the past 25 years. This is in protest against the fact that in the legislation passed by the government to deal with the inflation problem, there is no method by which workers or their trade unions can appeal against a decision by the Anti-Inflation Board or the administrator, against a decision which they consider to be unfair.

We listened to the greatest demagogue in this parliament, the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Marchand), who has had so many portfolios that even I cannot remember them, tell this House that members of this party are being demagogic. We listened to that friend of the Labour movement, the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey), suggest that members of the New Democratic Party were egging on the labour movement. He stated that if it were not for the NDP, the labour movement would not be opposing the government's anti-inflation program.

Today I got the latest issue of the Liberal party's house organ, *Maclean's* magazine. That magazine is beholden to the government because of legislation, which I support, that will eliminate *Time* magazine. It contains an article which I commend to the member who intends to speak. The title is "The Revolt of the Middle-Class Worker". This article was not written by a member of the NDP. It was written by one of the staff of what I call the house organ of the Liberal party, *Maclean's*. Let me put on record the last paragraph of that article. I quote:

—the federal government is committed to price and wage controls, the labor movement is as unmoving in its opposition to them, and a confrontation is inevitable. When it happens, 1975, for all its turmoil, will look like a year of tranquility in comparison.

That is *Maclean's* assessment of what we will have in 1976. Why? It is partly for the reason which we indicated in our motion. Had the government listened to the questions we have been asking for the past couple of weeks, had it followed the advice given tonight by the hon. member for Mississauga (Mr. Abbott), and had it indicated it was prepared to amend the legislation so that workers would have the right to appeal against a decision which they feel is unfair, we would not need to have this debate.

In every other kind of situation in which people feel they have been unjustly dealt with by a law, they have a right to go to a court for redress. Let me give some illustrations. Whether there be Liberal, Conservative, NDP or Social Credit governments, the provinces today are in the process of enacting legislation implementing rent controls. There is not one province which will pass a law which does not provide the right of a tenant or landlord to go before an independent appeal board if they feel they have been mistreated under the provisions of the law.

The government of Saskatchewan passed legislation permitting it to take over the potash mines. Written into the legislation are specific provisions outlining how the companies, if they do not agree with the government as to the prices to be paid for the companies, will be permitted to

[Mr. Friesen.]

take their complaints to an independent board chaired by a judge of the Superior Court of Saskatchewan.

The Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) felt that the sugar companies had conspired to raise the price of sugar. He was probably right. But his department and the Government of Canada, took those companies to court. They lost the case, and when the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs had some unkind things to say about the court and the judge, he was himself called before a court and penalized.

I cannot think of a situation where the government passes a law and then says that its appointees will be the prosecutors, the judge, and the jury all put together. Yet that is what we find in the present instance. We have heard a good deal about the workers being unreasonable in their demands. One would think, from some of the comments which have been made, that workers in the paper mills went on strike for no good reason—that they should have been satisfied with what they were offered by the companies.

Lest anyone is under the impression that these are poor companies I should like to read from the brief which the union presented to the anti-inflation administrator as follows:

The pulp and paper industry in Canada was coming out of a period of unprecedented prosperity which in 1973 saw them more than quadruple their 1972 net profits, after taxes, of \$79 million to \$320 million and then more than double this figure in 1974 to some \$685 million.

That sounded extreme to me. I thought the union might be exaggerating. So I took the trouble, as any hon. member might, of going to the reading room and getting the *Financial Post* survey of industries for 1975. I turned to the section dealing with the pulp and paper industry. What did I find? I want to put these figures on the record because we shall soon learn whether the employees were being unreasonable.

Here we find the Abitibi Paper Company, one of the leaders in the industry. In 1972, according to their own figures supplied to the *Financial Post*, they showed a net profit of \$8.5 million. In 1973 profits rose to \$30 million, and in 1974 they rose to \$45,800,000. Here are the figures for Consolidated Bathurst, no relation, of course, to the Liberal Party. In 1972 they made a net profit of \$6.4 million. In 1973 net profit rose to \$19.8 million, and in 1974 to \$47.7 million. Here are the figures for the Price Company: in 1972, \$6.6 million; in 1973, \$7.2 million, and in 1974, \$31.6 million.

It is the nature of the free enterprise system and of real collective bargaining that when companies make large profits, workers in the unions ask, and expect to get, a share of that increased profit. And that is all this union was doing. So they went on strike. When did they go on strike? Before the government announced its anti-inflation program. They had no knowledge this would happen. That is when they went on strike. Some of them were on strike for seven months.

● (0010)

When agreement was reached with the Irving paper company, the Anti-Inflation Board said, "Your increase of 23 per cent or 21 per cent is too much; you cannot have more than 14 per cent". Did the Anti-Inflation Board say