

Private Members' Business

• (1720)

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to make some comments on the bill presently before the House.

Let me say to the hon. member who just spoke that there is no alternative. Never did I think that in the House of Commons there would ever be a bill brought in that was going to take away the right to strike from the employees in this country.

It is a fundamental right that belongs to and has been fought for over the years. To think that some member would say in the House of Commons that the right to strike should be taken away from the employees in this country deserves some mention not only from this side of the House but from my friends who I am sure will follow me. Comments like that must be addressed, and at the earliest possible time.

If there is one group of individuals in my constituency—I am sure in many parts of this country—who have been hard done by by the Conservative policies, it is the grain handlers, and particularly the grain handlers in Thunder Bay.

If the hon. member wanted to make comments on how to solve the problems in the grain industry in this country, perhaps he should have been better advised to give some degree of consideration to the St. Lawrence Seaway, the viability of the greatest inland waterway in this country, and perhaps to the largest terminals that are available for grain storage. Those are located in the city of Thunder Bay, the area that I represent.

I do not know how much more the grain handlers in Thunder Bay can take at the hands of this government. We know that the grain business in Canada is affected in three ways. It is affected by legislation, where our markets are and, unfortunately, it is affected by politics.

In so far as the legislation is concerned, the Western Grain Transportation Act has to be changed. We can no longer rely on the theory that distance is going to be the relative factor in how we ship and subsidize the movement of grain in this country. We have got to change this act, and we have got to start to realize the costing mechanism that is available.

I think what we have to do with respect to the Western Grain Transportation Act is to get some accurate costing on what it costs the railways, CP and CN, to move a tonne of grain certain distances in this country and not to relate the cost of those areas in just the distances that are travelled. So the Western Grain Transportation Act has to be changed.

We were led to believe so many times that markets had a great bearing on why the ports in Vancouver and Prince Rupert were so busy, and why they were experiencing the movement of grain up to 60 per cent or 70 per cent of all the grain that we export in this country, until Iraq.

Iraq has always been a traditional market that was served through the port of Thunder Bay to the down river ports and then over to the mid-eastern countries. When the ships were stopped because of the embargo on grain, the ships that were stopped that were loaded for grain and sent to Iraq were not in the down river ports in the St. Lawrence. They were not in the ports of Thunder Bay, but were in the port of Vancouver.

This dispelled the theory that we have been led to believe, that the markets were in the Pacific Rim and not the markets that were traditionally served by that great inland seaway, the St. Lawrence Seaway and the port of Thunder Bay.

Unfortunately it seems, that, although we do not like to acknowledge it, that politics does play a part in where and how the shipment of grain is handled in this country. That is the reason for the disparity and the inequity that is caused because of the absence of grain going through the port of Thunder Bay, using the St. Lawrence Seaway and utilizing the magnificent structures in the down river ports in Baie Comeau and other centres around Montreal.

When I got this legislation, I could not believe what the member was proposing as to how to solve the effects of certain labour problems in the grain industry in Canada. I asked one of my friends who is involved in the grain industry, and I would like to read with your indulgence the views of the grain handlers in Thunder Bay regarding this particular bill.

These views were passed. I thank Mr. Herbert Daniher, the General Chairman of the Canadian Lakehead Grain Elevators Workers Transportation and Communications Union. He said to me that the hon. member for