

We also agreed that this debate should be expedited. It will serve no purpose to drag it out for days. It will not help the farmers, the railroaders or the small-businessmen. It will not help the workers directly affected because the law is retroactive. That is why we agreed to expedite this legislation.

I hope the Minister will have paid attention to what was said by the two speakers from the Official Opposition and my two colleagues and I when he is dealing with the Bill in Committee of the Whole. I hope the Minister will recognize what the Hon. Member for Rosedale talked about when he referred to hitting at the rights of individuals and groups and the unilateral imposition of something that is patently inequitable and unfair. I hope the Minister of Labour (Mr. Caccia) and his colleagues will recognize that and will make appropriate amendments or support appropriate amendments which may or may not come from this side of the House. Let me illustrate what is probably the most glaringly inequitable and unfair imposition.

The National Harbours Board approved and awarded to the Maritime Employers Association on the west coast a 14 per cent increase in their rates in handling containers effective last January 1. I see nothing in this bill that would roll back that increase. This was done with the understanding and knowledge of the National Harbours Board and the Employers' Association that the employers would propose a 10 per cent increase in wages for the longshoremen. That was the main reason for the 14 per cent increase for the employers on their rates for the handling of containers. Now the Bill proposes that if there is no agreement reached between the two sides by next Monday, the employees are subject to six and five. What about the employers being subject to six and five on the 14 per cent increase they received? As the Hon. Member for North Vancouver-Burnaby pointed out, it is just another example of contributing to continued strife and industrial relation wars in our ports.

● (1640)

The Minister's Bill deals with slowdowns. It will be interesting to see who will interpret what is and what is not a slowdown and when and how a slowdown is initiated. When a company has a good, conscientious employee who works to and obeys all the rules laid down by his employer, and the Government has the nerve to call it a slowdown, I suggest that the Government and the employees are admitting that there is something wrong with the rules. I find it passing strange to criticize an employee because he works according to the rules of his employment. That logic escapes me completely. Both the employer and the employee can work to rule. This occurs on occasion because it is sometimes the only mechanism that one or the other has to convey its position to the other.

I suggest as well that the record will show that my colleagues and I, my friends in the Official Opposition and on the Government side, are fighting and working for workers, farmers, pensioners and all average Canadians. That is on the record and cannot be denied. I know better than most and as much as the remaining Members in this place that no matter what any single Member of Parliament or Party in this place says about a measure such as this, someone will be hurt.

West Coast Ports Operations Act

Surely it is incumbent upon all legislators who believe in trying to meet the best test of sincerity, integrity and consistency, to practise fairness and equality with regard to both sides affected by this legislation. When we are faced with a situation such as this for the twelfth time in ten years, we must go to extraordinary lengths to ensure equity. Without that equal measure of fairness and equity, we are defeating the objective of every Hon. Member.

We want the ports to be in operation but we do not want the employees to be handed a six and five situation at the bargaining table by a third party—namely the Government of Canada—when, in fact, the employer offered 10 per cent and 8 per cent, the employees wanted 13 per cent and 10 per cent and the conciliator recommended 12 per cent and 9 per cent. I do not believe there is much argument over monetary matters.

The intervention of the third party—the Government of Canada—was also faced by the grain handlers, and I was about to say that we may be back in the House dealing with this same situation concerning the grain handlers who have been in a position to strike for the last month or two. However, I have just received word that they signed an agreement last night. Hon. Members can breathe a sigh of relief that we will not face that situation in a couple of weeks. We have seen that collective bargaining does work. However, one of the reasons that it took so long for the grain elevator operators and the grain handlers to reach an agreement was that when the conciliator's offer was accepted by the union, the companies were faced with a 6 per cent regime on their handling, elevation and storage charges. While the companies agreed to a 10 per cent pay raise in the second year of the contract which the companies insisted on having, the intervention of the third party at the bargaining table, namely the Government, with its six and five program put the employers in an impossible position in terms of what they were willing to accept as pay raises for the grain handlers.

Surely this situation applies to the matter we are concerned with today. The employers offered 10 per cent, the conciliator recommends 12 per cent and the union wants 13 per cent. In comes the third party and messes it up.

Back to work legislation, as distasteful as it is to all Members of the House, to all parties and to all Governments, is less distasteful if it is fair and equitable and treats each side equally. If this does not happen, you can mark my words, Mr. Speaker, that one or two years down the road we will once again be dealing with a longshoremen's port shutdown, if not on the west coast, then on the St. Lawrence River or the east coast. As sure as we are sitting here, it will happen again.

The time to seriously deal with problems faced in our ports must begin tomorrow so that we will not have to face today's situation once again. I can call it nothing more than incompetence or indifference on the part of the Government. It has known of these problems and has been faced with them time and time again, year in and year out. However, it will not deal with these problems.