

Labour Dispute at Montreal

substantial wage increase and settle differences which went beyond monetary consideration.

Mr. Picard was appointed to help settle the various points at issue, and the situation prevailing at this time is no more and no less than a misunderstanding between both parties, the Montreal longshoreman and the Shipping Federation, as to the interpretation of the Picard report. What I find strange, Mr. Speaker, is that this report was accepted by both parties; yet, they failed to agree as to its interpretation. It is admitted practically by all that some recommendations or suggestions in the report are not very clear, and during the debate this morning, it seemed that all sorts of things were being added.

A few moments ago I heard the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) say that—I am sorry for bringing this up, but since this gentleman raised the matter first, I would like to make this point—in the case of the dispute involving the port of Vancouver, the minister shouldered his responsibilities, and if the present dispute involved any harbour other than Montreal, he would act much more quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister and I approve his answer to the question which was put to him yesterday in this house. Words should not be misinterpreted. As is shown on page 4598 of the *Hansard* of November 23, this is the answer given by the minister to a first question asked by the hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke (Mr. Johnston):

There is no authority under which the Minister of Labour can intervene in cases of this kind. The parties must learn that they should try to work out their own differences.

I agree with that in principle. It does not mean that there is not a little more to be done in the present case. However, I will read the answer given by the minister to a supplementary question put by hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr), and I quote:

As I reported to the house yesterday, I have discussed this matter at length with one side last Friday and offered to do so with the other. Officers of my department have discussed it with that other party. It has even been suggested that if there is ambiguity in one or two passages of the Picard report or at least arising out of the fact that the Picard report supplements and amends the existing agreement, that Dr. Picard himself be asked to clarify ambiguities. One of the parties, the unions, will not accept that suggestion.

[Mr. Laniel.]

Nevertheless Mr. Speaker, I wonder to what extent the Minister of Labour, the government, will always be asked to intervene and dictate solutions?

Personally, as a taxpayer, as a citizen believing in democracy, when I hear labour unions and various organizations make demands on the authorities or secure the right to negotiate, I do not know what to believe because as soon as a conflict arises, we see what happens.

As a matter of fact, we have seen what happened in Montreal at the time of the Transport Commission conflict. At that time, the member for Lapointe did not make charges against the Johnson government as he did against the federal Minister of Labour, because it is not helpful to his cause of Quebec independence. Nevertheless, and as a citizen of the province of Quebec who sees people act and looks at the existing organizations and the means available to settle these differences, I consider that the reply of the minister is fair and that, on the whole, it represents a solution that was not accepted by one of the two parties.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the situation which prevails now cannot continue. However, nobody in this house can deny that Mr. Picard is away on holidays at the present time and that he will be back on Monday. I think that a solution may then be found, because if there is a man who can interpret the contents of the Picard report, I feel that it is not the federal Minister of Labour but Mr. Picard himself and if, following that interpretation, a practical solution cannot be found, then the minister might review his stand.

The minister wanted this debate and he can tell the house this morning to what extent his views may have changed. In the meantime, I trust him, and I am convinced that if the house continues to take positive action, we shall find a solution to this problem in a very near future.

[*English*]

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be very brief; it is getting close to one o'clock and I will try to conclude them before the break if possible.

First I should like to join with my hon. friend the senior member for Halifax and support the suggestion he made in furtherance of the remarks of my hon. friend from Kamloops with regard to a task force. I urge the minister to give serious consideration to uniting with the Minister of Manpower and