

I must say that I appreciate the view expressed by the spokesman for the New Democratic Party, that his party wants this legislation to move forward quickly so that grain can begin to move through Vancouver. I regret the attitude of the official opposition, which seems not to be very concerned about the situation at the moment.

I suppose somewhere in the annals of our industrial history we might find what could be described as examples of perfect negotiations or perfect industrial relations. But most surely these examples would be few and far between in our less than perfect world. The present situation in Vancouver falls far short of perfection when viewed from almost any perspective, and the difficulties of this past summer have taken place against a sorry background of sour relationships and discord extending back more than a decade. In view of this sad history, I particularly welcome the proposal today by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) that an industrial inquiry commission will soon be appointed to thoroughly investigate the history of labour relations in the grain handling industry at Vancouver.

Requests for such a move have come from such diverse sources as the Palliser Wheat Growers' Association and, I believe, the National Farmers' Union. I know we will all wish the commission well in its work toward achieving a better industrial relationship between the grain handling companies and their employees. I am sure prairie grain producers are looking forward to an era of more stability in this field so that they need not fear further costly disruptions in the movement of their grain into export position.

● (1720)

There are two general issues with which I shall deal briefly. First, some parties in this House and outside have tried to paint the government as the ogre in this sad situation. I ask members, before they make their judgment in this case, to look carefully at the chronology of events which stretch back for one year. Negotiations began for a new contract on October 19, 1973, almost a full year ago. The existing contract was due to expire on November 30. Direct negotiations between the parties continued for almost two months, without success.

The parties requested federal mediation assistance about the middle of December, 1973. That assistance was forthcoming immediately and two skilled mediators struggled to find reasonable common ground for agreement between the parties. They worked for another two months but were unable to show signs of progress. A clear impasse had been reached and the Minister of Labour moved to appoint as conciliation commissioner Dr. Perry, who began his duties on February 15, 1974, four full months after discussions had begun originally. So this was hardly a premature move.

The appointment apparently was well received. Dr. Perry is a skilled man, an expert who is widely respected and well known in the field and, as the minister pointed out earlier, he had worked with these same parties a few years previously. It is interesting to note that amid all the controversy surrounding the dispute nobody has attacked Dr. Perry's competence, ability or impartiality. There has been criticism from some sides of the recommendations he

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put forward, yet nobody has attacked his ability to deal with the situation or his competence in the field. Dr. Perry worked with both sides for 2½ months but was unable to draw them together. Finally, he produced a report recommending what he saw to be a fair and reasonable settlement.

**Mr. Fraser:** Surely it was a basis for settlement.

**Mr. Goodale:** Yes, it was a basis for settlement. Those words are important. This was the best advice available to the parties and to the government of Canada. Clearly, he had done a sound and thorough job in the circumstances. The Perry report in itself was the end product of this particular collective bargaining process. We must keep that point in mind. It was a process which the parties themselves over a period of 6½ months, with all the help in the world, had failed to make work.

What was the government to do with Dr. Perry's report? Could it reasonably, after all that had gone before, say, "No, we don't particularly care for this report. We will put it aside and appoint another conciliation commissioner who will work with the parties for another 2½ months and produce another report which we may or may not accept?" And on and on the process could go.

Clearly, once the parties directly involved in the negotiations, the employers and employees, had allowed their negotiations to deteriorate over more than half a year to the point where an expert, impartial third party had to investigate the situation and produce a thorough report, with recommendations, all the parties, the employers, employees as well as the government, had to be prepared to give that particular report some credence, authority and weight. The view adopted by the government was that the Perry report could not simply be tossed aside as unworthy of discussion.

The government urged this view on all sides, privately and eventually publicly. The workers agreed to it, the companies did not. To ensure continued grain movement during the period parliament was in dissolution, the government acted under section 181 of the Canada Labour Code to prevent a strike or lock-out, indeed to prevent a stoppage in grain exports, until August 8. All the while efforts continued at the official and ministerial level to have negotiations resume on the basis proposed by Dr. Perry. His report was clearly intended to be a basis for further negotiation, but this negotiation did not prove successful. Finally, in late August all work stopped. Exhaustive efforts to bring about a voluntary settlement failed. Further efforts would be pointless. And here we are today.

Allegations of blame are not helpful if we are to reach lasting solutions to difficult problems of this nature, but I believe two points should be put on record. First, once it was made clear to the representatives of the union that the government, if forced to do so, would legislate an end to the dispute on the basis of principles contained in Dr. Perry's report—again, these words were carefully chosen—there could be no excuse for continuing a work slowdown which hampered grain movement. That course of action was not responsible, and perhaps contributed to the further deterioration in relations. It certainly added to the harm done to western grain producers.