

tional mediation efforts the gap could be closed without there being any necessity for us to proclaim Part II. I must point out that those people are in a different situation but potentially in a very serious one from the point of view of parliament.

• (1220)

Mr. Baldwin: I would like to ask the minister a question. It will not be very long and it is one which concerns all western members in particular. I do not suggest that it does not concern everybody else. In light of the fact the Prime Minister indicated that the reason for summoning parliament to pass this bill was particularly directed at the question of the need for Canada to meet her contractual obligations in regard to transportation and shipment of grain, having in mind what the minister has now said and having in mind the contents of the bill, having in mind the minister's knowledge through his department officials of the current state of a great many possible or potential industrial disputes which might affect the subject matter of our debate, and having in mind that very likely we are now at the threshold of an election which may mean that parliament might not be called until next January, is the minister able to give an undertaking that with the passage of this bill there will not be any industrial disputes which will interfere with the transportation and shipment of grain to meet our contractual obligations?

Mr. O'Connell: I do not think I can give any advance commitment of that kind. If that situation arose on the west coast ports, we have taken the precaution of inserting Part II and we would proclaim Part II. If that was the question then that is the answer. Part II may be proclaimed by order in council at any time if this act is passed.

Mr. Stanfield: May I ask the minister whether or not the provisions in the labour code adopted last spring, if proclaimed, would enable the government to deal with any lockout or walkout during the period following the dissolution of the House and prior to the return of the writ?

Mr. O'Connell: Mr. Chairman, the proclamation of the new Part V, if I may call it that, would put the government in a position by order in council to postpone any dispute, the right to a strike having been earned in a period after the dissolution of parliament. But we should be clear that in the case of which we are thinking, that is the problem on the west coast, those strike rights have been acquired prior to dissolution and the government is not in a position to override the provisions of the legislation. The dissolution has to take place and then any seven day running period after which the rights are acquired must expire.

Mr. Stanfield: Is it the intention of the government to proclaim Part V of the labour code?

Mr. O'Connell: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it is the intention to proclaim Part V. There is the question of time. I want to insist—and I am sure you would expect me to do so—that Part V should be launched in a proper way so that the new board may be in a position to operate it. We should not launch it simply to do something in an election period, if indeed one occurs. We should launch it when the new

West Coast Ports Operations Bill

board is selected, and we are well advanced into doing that. But it would surely be a very bad beginning to hasten the proclamation of a bill simply to deal with a contingency that might or might not arise and for the sake of a provision that has never been there before. I expect that the proclamation can take place relatively soon.

Mr. Skoberg: Mr. Chairman, the answer given by the Minister of Labour a while ago still does not solve some of the problems that I can see coming up. I should like to ask him directly whether or not the grain handlers now affected have any contract whatsoever, and can the grain elevator companies do as they desire with the people who are employed by them. In other words, will the minister introduce any provision that the old agreement shall be in effect until the new agreement is signed?

The second question which I should like to put is whether or not the elevator companies at one time accepted the recommendation of the conciliation board report which the union people accepted by a 63 per cent vote, and did those companies then go back on their word and offer five cents less an hour?

Third, I wonder whether or not the elevator companies are holding up to ransom the government of Canada by asking for an increase of half a cent a bushel which would mean about \$2 million a year increase in their incomes, and are they using this means of political interference to obtain that half a cent a bushel?

These are the questions to which we want an answer from the minister because we have seen reports going out that the elevator companies were at one time quite prepared to do something, but if they accepted at one time the report of the conciliation board and then went back on their word, we should be informed of this. It is high time that we found out whether or not this is correct.

Mr. O'Connell: With regard to the first question, the existing agreement would be extended for up to four months if and when a proclamation brings the part into force, but prior to the proclamation we are doing nothing here which would extend the existing agreement. If we did that, we would in effect be saying that an emergency exists with respect to grain handlers when in fact it does not exist. It exists in the longshoremen's dispute which has closed down the ports. The grain handlers are not on strike and there is no lockout. They may have grievances. I have been hearing of some of them from the president of the union whom I met several times yesterday, but those grievances do not constitute the emergency with which we are dealing.

The hon. member asked a second question. All I can say on that is that the mediation which we will launch immediately will hopefully close a gap which may exist in wages, in shift premiums and in any other matters, particularly in the health and welfare plans.

As to the third question, I do not want to enter into that as Minister of Labour—that is the role of the mediators. They have to discover whether there is any evidence of the companies pressuring governments. That suggestion was made by the hon. member. I have no evidence of that and it would be sheer speculation on my part to pursue that line any further.