

inspector on the waterfront at Vancouver. The memorandum urges that such an inspector should be appointed—

—whose word would be final and binding in regard to the use of gear, equipment, et cetera; and whereas the Vancouver Labour Council has duly considered the report of this committee, this petition and demand for the appointment of a government safety inspector for the port of Vancouver is hereby made.

I should like to quote just a few brief paragraphs:

Statistics from the annual report of the Workmen's Compensation Board of British Columbia for the year 1928 show the following figures:

Stevedoring: Temporary total disability, 528.

Wage loss of over \$100,000.

Permanent partial disability, 32.

Fatal accidents, 5.

This report shows a total final compensation award to workmen or their dependents of \$111,498.88 for the year 1928.

The statement goes on to point out:

At the present time there is a sort of supervision of gear and practice on the waterfront. The Shipping Federation of British Columbia has a man whom they call "safety engineer" who, being employed by the employers, has authority only to suggest and advise but has no absolute power to stop any unsafe practices or the using of unsafe gear, and therefore is unable to aid materially in the protection that the workers in these industries are entitled to.

There is a safety engineer also appointed by the Vancouver Harbour Commissioners but, as he has no absolute authority, his advice and suggestions are acted upon by the employers only when it suits their immediate convenience.

The request has been made, since the submission of that memorandum, that the responsible officials should take the necessary action for the appointment of a safety inspector with full authority for the loading and unloading of ships. On the 5th instant, a definite refusal to move in the matter was received by letter from Mr. E. Hawken, Acting Deputy Minister of Marine. In his letter Mr. Hawken says:

In reply would advise that the representations made respecting the proposed duties of an inspector are not considered practicable as it would be impossible for any individual to efficiently inspect all cargo appliances and general loading conditions as applied to the individual holds in the several vessels loading and unloading, without seriously affecting the dispatch of the ships concerned which would ultimately reflect upon the port.

I would also advise that there is no authority under any Canadian legislation before me, whereby the department could appoint a safety engineer with power as suggested.

Tackle inspectors are appointed under the Canada Shipping Act, Part VIII, and their powers prescribed by sections 674, and penalties by section 681.

The request that has been presented in the memorandum forwarded to the minister is

eminently reasonable, and I do not think the letter written by the deputy minister altogether covers the case and his objections are not well taken. It was not proposed that this officer should inspect the holds of each individual vessel. I quite agree that that would be impracticable, but if there were a man present who had authority to act, the very fact that he was there would in most cases prevent the continuance of the abuses which not exist. The men who are at work in the holds of these ships are familiar with the necessary safety devices; they are so accustomed to handling the various types of gear that they could easily discover whether or not these were in proper condition. If they were in improper condition and if a safety inspector were available, the men could readily apply to him and he would then come and inspect the appliances.

This is a case where there is apparently some authority and responsibility resting with the department. I would assume the department has authority to make such appointments as are necessary for the safeguarding of life and limb and for protecting the welfare of the workers on the waterfront. I speak rather feelingly with regard to this particular matter, because some twelve years ago I myself worked in this particular occupation on the waterfront in Vancouver and I know from personal experience something of the hazards which must be undertaken. I know the appliances in those days were far from being satisfactory and according to the memorandum before me there has been no very great change for the better. When the statistics of the Workmen's Compensation Board show such a heavy list of accidents and a number of fatalities, it seems to me that the least the government can do for the waterfront workers is to provide that an inspector with authority is appointed. The matter is urgent and should not be laid over for another year.

Mr. CARDIN: I quite understand the importance of the question raised by my hon. friend, but we already have inspectors of tackle and gear appointed by the harbour commission and also the Shipping Federation. According to the law as it stands, we have not authority to appoint any inspector having greater powers than those exercised at present by the appointees of the harbour commission or the Shipping Federation. But I assure my hon. friend we are considering the introduction of legislation in order to meet the objects indicated in the representations that have been made.