

*Government Orders*

In looking at the legislation, I too believe that for the most part it is reasonable legislation, although I have always objected to the high fines that are there and which are obviously very high on the employees and do not have the same economic impact on employers. The reality of the situation is that the employers can always afford these fines where individual Canadians cannot afford them.

The other aspect of the legislation that disturbs me is the fact that it was brought in because the director of mediation services says he cannot successfully complete his work.

Let us look at what happened yesterday. The director of mediation finally arrives in Thunder Bay. It was his first day there. He has a meeting with the union and the company. They agree to get back to the table. There is an understanding that the outstanding issue, which was pensions, would be dealt with at this meeting.

As the meeting is about to commence, there is a Canadian Press story saying that the minister of grains and oilseeds has announced that the government will be introducing back to work legislation.

At the same time that story barged its way into the mediation room, the House of Commons committee that deals with labour matters was also meeting. I got a copy of that CP story which I showed to the minister in the committee. The record will show that.

I said that the announcement would destroy the work of the director of mediation. Later that afternoon, I had a chance to talk with the union side. The first thing that was said, even before I had a chance to open my mouth was: "Did you see what Mr. Mayer said?" Their caucus was up in arms.

They said—I understand that the director of mediation echoed it—that the whole mood of the mediation changed as a result of that premature and completely unnecessary political announcement by the minister of grains and oilseeds.

I do not know whether or not mediation would have worked. I am not going to make one of these announcements that says: "If Mr. Mayer had not said what he said, then mediation would have succeeded." I do know that it failed as a result of the unnecessary and unwarranted

intervention of the minister responsible for grains and oilseeds.

I have been a negotiator and I know how important it is to have a good mood in a negotiating room, to feel that you are being treated fairly so that you can work out the problems.

As I said earlier, yesterday was the first time that the employers were willing to allow the controversial issue of pensions to be dealt with. It was the first time, at the very first meeting on the issue that is preventing a settlement. Then the dagger was dropped.

The dagger was dropped by this government, not by the minister responsible for labour, the person who has been saying in this House that we have to let mediation work, that he wants the mediator to go in there to try to resolve this issue and to get both parties together. No, that power was taken from the Minister of Labour. It was usurped by the minister of grains and oilseeds, a man who is completely insensitive as to what the job of a mediator is. He was completely insensitive to how damaging his remarks would be.

His words may have played well in certain parts of the country and they may have played well in a province that is facing a provincial election on October 21, but they were unnecessary remarks. They were inappropriate remarks and they were very damaging remarks. I wish the minister of grains and oilseeds was in the House and could apologize to the people of Canada.

I come from western Canada and I do understand the plight of the farmers, especially at this time. I understand their concern for making sure that grain flows. We could understand that. We can support that but I find it ironic that this government wants this legislation passed now.

We have had the Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds and various Conservative backbenchers get up and say we must let the grain flow. Yet yesterday in the House of Commons I asked the Minister of Agriculture this: "If you want the grain to flow, why are you laying off workers in Churchill tomorrow, Friday of this week; why are you closing down the one port that has not been affected by strikes at all this year?"