

Labour Dispute at Montreal

would have to be increased productivity and labour would have to cease fighting modern technological methods. This was basically the problem at that time.

In order to establish properly what was the real cause of friction on the waterfront and what could be done to bring about increased productivity, under the authority of Bill C-215 the Minister of Labour established what is now known as the Picard commission or, more formally, the inquiry commission on the St. Lawrence ports. I think its report is a very significant document and I have read it not once but several times, as I hope most hon. members have.

I agree with labour that there are ambiguous sections in the report, and if they are ambiguous to labour I presume they must be ambiguous to management as well. If they are ambiguous to both sides in the dispute, then I think we have a moral duty to clarify the ambiguity. Therefore there should be no reluctance on the part of the minister or the government to make sure that Mr. Picard comes back and clarifies these ambiguous sections of his report. I think that by so doing he will in no way be infringing upon the collective agreement that is in existence between labour and management. If Mr. Picard clarifies what he meant in this report, then it would be up to labour and management to take advantage of the processes within the labour laws and the agreements should they not agree with his interpretation of the problems and the solutions.

I am speaking more as a Montrealer than as an assistant to the Minister of Labour. Unless labour and management in that port face up to realities the port of Montreal will dwindle into a second class port. There are too many alternate methods of shipping today for a port such as Montreal to be in a constant state of turmoil. In a country such as Canada which depends on export markets we cannot afford the luxury of management and labour wrangling every few months about wage agreements and working conditions.

• (4:00 p.m.)

By the same token it is unfair of anyone to presume that the source of friction is entirely on the labour side. Those who have read the Picard report and are familiar with longshoring, or those who know anything about port facilities, will realize that the basic and essential problem that causes friction in the

port of Montreal is job security. Job insecurity in the Montreal port is a greater threat to labour and management relations than it is in Vancouver because of climatic conditions.

Longshoremen might be considered as unskilled labour, and the men are drawn from the labouring or working class whose educational levels are perhaps quite low. With the realization that the port of Montreal is only open seven or eight months a year these people engaged in longshoring must face the fact that there is little or no employment for them in the winter months. Professor Picard recognized this fact, and one of the basic principles of his report relates to job security and minimum income spread over 52 weeks. This is a major breakthrough which was never touched upon by the opposition in the actions it took in respect of this problem in the port of Montreal.

Governments have for too long been satisfied simply to get the parties together on some form of wage agreement that would keep them together and create a little peace for the greater part of the two year period between collective agreements. They have never before got at the root or source of the problem. The Picard report does, and if there are areas of ambiguity they should be clarified. I think there is a moral obligation on Mr. Picard to come back from his holiday and clarify these ambiguities. That is my opinion, and it is not expressed by me as one on the side of labour any more than I am on the side of management. We cannot afford the luxury of keeping the port of Montreal closed when any day now the river will begin to freeze, with an ensuing economic impact on fruit growers, exporters and importers in this nation. This is a luxury we can no longer afford.

Mr. Alkenbrack: Does the hon. member not realize that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene) would not admit that a few minutes ago?

Mr. Mackasey: The Minister of Agriculture simply clarified a point, the point being that there are not tons of apples lying rotting on the wharves in the port of Montreal. This is the type of innuendo and false impression that unfortunately creeps into every debate involving labour. It is unfair to labour and in this case it is simply not true, as pointed out by the statistics presented by the Minister of Agriculture. I happen to think that if there is only one case of apples rotting in the port of Montreal that is one case too many.