

Pacific Coast Longshoremen Dispute

crisis that has brought about this debate demonstrates the necessity for action with respect to such a policy.

We have here a national emergency which requires immediate action and solution. It has been described by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas) as a mess. I think it could be described as an unholy mess which precludes any further delay. I recognize that you do not always get, and in fact perhaps you seldom get, the most acceptable solution in the long run when you settle a dispute in a crisis atmosphere. I have already said that part of the government's great responsibility for this crisis was in allowing it to develop into crisis proportions, instead of dealing with it effectively before it became a crisis. But we now have a crisis which requires immediate solution. The minister has told us it will be six months or a year before we get the report of the task force which has been set up to study Canada's labour laws. We cannot wait that long. We cannot wait for a full legislative answer, the answer to all the problems by way of a comprehensive overhaul and amendment of our legislation in this field.

I submit that action is therefore necessary at least to the extent suggested by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker); that is, the government must decide whether changes are required in the law setting up the Canada Labour Relations Board, and what changes are required now to solve this crisis. We have not yet had an assurance from the minister that he will bring back from Vancouver an answer to that question, or even that he is going out there in the frame of mind that would enable him to get it. I suggest we should have that assurance immediately—that as a result of the minister's visit there will be at least an immediate recommendation or submission of legislation to amend the act in order to arrive at a solution of this crisis.

In addition, of course, there should be the immediate appointment of a mediator who will stay there permanently until the crisis is solved and the movement of shipping in and out of Vancouver and the other B.C. ports is resumed at full scale. Third, I suggest we are entitled to the assurance at this time that steps will be taken at once to develop an over-all policy with respect to the co-ordination of rail, road, shipping movements and harbour facilities not only in Vancouver but on the whole Pacific coast.

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I submit that parliament should be given these assurances immediately. While one appreciates the minister's desire that at the end of this debate we will go quietly back to work, I suggest that he is not entitled to expect this unless parliament receives these assurances now. The opportunity has been presented to us by the hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke to demand and receive these assurances without which, in my submission, this motion will not have served its purpose.

Mr. F. J. Bigg (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in this debate, especially when you see that for once parliament is unanimous in its wish to serve the Canadian people. I wish it were always so. The present situation is a serious one. It is easy to blame the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) for the crisis, but I am sure nobody in this chamber would want the Canadian people to think that all the blame lies on his shoulders. The difficulties which have arisen in labour relations in this country are a long story. In the labour press I have been called an enemy of labour. I do not know where they got that notion, because I have always had to work for a living and have the greatest sympathy for the working man. At times I have spoken against the abuses committed by certain sections of the labour movement, perhaps that is why I get the reputation. I wish to put that straight.

I believe that what is wrong is the almost complete breakdown in a rational approach to this whole problem. I shall not bother explaining what they do in other countries in this regard. This is our personal problem, our own homework. I suggest that we have to set up in the very near future—I should like to think we will begin today—a system whereby in the interests of Canada we can bring labour and management together. I think this can be achieved only if both sides take a new look at this problem.

Labour is always saying that management is wrong. For a few moments I will show where I think management is wrong in certain respects. I do not think management takes the proper, long look at these problems, and that this is the cause of some labour strikes. Most strikes are caused by low wages and the rising cost of living; they are caused by poor living conditions and lack of housing. They are caused by the fact they do not have year round employment and, on the other hand, perhaps they are caused by abuse of the bargaining powers by the unions themselves. What should management do about this? I