

*Strike of Grain Handlers*

I do urge upon the government, as strongly as I possibly can, that similar action be taken with regard to the strike on the west coast. I believe if the representatives of the two parties were brought here to Ottawa and interviewed by the minister and his deputy there would be a reasonable chance of settling this unfortunate strike. It is now two and a half weeks since Mr. Wilson left for Ottawa and, as I mentioned a moment ago, he said at that time there was no chance of the parties getting together if they were left to themselves. I believe the practical step to take now is to bring the representatives here to Ottawa in order to see if these troubles cannot be ironed out.

Out on the west coast we feel we are a long way from the centre of Canada, a long way from headquarters. We are inclined to believe that difficulties of this kind in our province do not count as much down here at Ottawa as if the troubles were in the port of Montreal, or at the lakehead. We have the actual fact that the threatened strike at the lakehead has been settled. Whether it is because Vancouver and New Westminster are so far away, on the other side of the mountains, and they do not stir up the activities in the Department of Labour as much as do troubles at Fort William or Port Arthur, or at Montreal, I cannot say.

This is a very unfortunate strike. Grave damage is being done to the ports of Vancouver and New Westminster and, as I have said, to the farmers on the prairies. I believe if the government took the lead and invited the representatives of these groups down here to Ottawa, there is a reasonable chance that the strike could be settled without any further delay. I rose tonight in this debate simply to place that suggestion before the government in the hope that they will take action either along that or some other line. I realize that it is a difficult problem, but it is never going to be settled by sitting back waiting for something to happen.

**Mr. Angus MacInnis (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Green) has done a service for the people on the Pacific coast, both labour and management, in bringing this matter to the attention of the house. I doubt if there will be anything in what I shall have to say that has not been touched upon by the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra, but I also wish to add my support to the request he has made of the Department of Labour that it should endeavour to get both parties together in Ottawa or somewhere else and indicate to them that the time has arrived when a settlement of this dispute is imperative.

[Mr. Green.]

I regret very much that neither the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) nor his parliamentary assistant is in the house this evening. I do not say that in a fault-finding way because I know they had no forewarning that this matter would be raised. Furthermore, I am not saying it in a fault-finding way because I have been almost constantly in touch with the Department of Labour with respect to this matter and I know they are concerned. My last word was with Mr. Maclean, the deputy minister, just before the house adjourned on Thursday for the short Easter recess. I was to call him again this morning but unfortunately I did not have time to do so because of pressure of other business.

I want to give the house a brief summary of the events leading up to the strike and of what has taken place since the strike, as given to me by the elevator employees. The contract between the local union and the terminal elevator companies terminated on November 30, 1952. The union tried to enter into negotiations with them shortly after the expiration of the agreement, but the companies would not discuss any proposals for a new agreement if the union would not agree to a wage cut of 5 cents an hour, I believe. On the suggestion of the representative of the companies, Mr. R. H. Tupper, Q.C., the entire matter was submitted to a board of conciliation under the chairmanship of Professor J. A. Crumb of the University of British Columbia. Both majority and minority reports were made by the members of the conciliation board. The majority report recommended certain fringe benefits, as they are called, involving an increase in wages for employees working in dusty jobs and a differential of 5 cents an hour for night work. It also recommended two additional holidays with pay. There was no mention at all in the majority report of either a wage increase or a wage decrease.

As I understand it, the minority report coincided with the majority report on the points I have mentioned but also recommended an increase in wages of 12½ cents an hour. The employees accepted the recommendations of the majority report with the exception of the one on wages, and asked that this matter be discussed directly between themselves and the companies. On the other hand, I am told that the companies rejected all the recommendations of both the majority and minority reports. They rejected the benefits to which their own member on the board and the chairman had agreed.

This left the employees in the very difficult position of either going on strike or agreeing to sign an agreement involving a 5 cents per