

Labour Dispute at Montreal

My question to you is this: as president of the International Longshoremen's Association are you prepared to undertake if necessary the same efforts here in Montreal to have the men accept a cut in the gang?

A. I would say no, I think that it would be foolish. Like I said, I think there is a contract in effect until December 31, 1967 and I would support the rank and file and the local unions in Canada, as the international president, to maintain those conditions and maintain that contract until its expiration.

Rightly or wrongly, the shipping federation say they are convinced that arbitration will do what Mr. Gleason predicted was going to happen, that is, it will protract the whole business until December 31.

• (3:10 p.m.)

In discussions with the shipping companies, I drew attention to the fact that the shipping season was nearly over and there was going to be a new agreement. I said, "Now, be realistic". They said, "Well, we had a shutdown in Montreal in the spring of 1966 which lasted seven weeks and if we go along with this situation during arbitration until the end of this particular shipping season in 1967 we are only going to be faced with a six or seven weeks slowdown or perhaps longer in Montreal next spring. We would rather have a showdown now when there are only two or three weeks to go". It is as simple as that. I still feel it would have been much better if an arbitrator had been appointed at that time, and I suggested it. I believe the language of the report is clear. However, neither side would agree to an arbitrator, although I learned this morning that the longshoremen have intimated they might now consider arbitration.

Another suggestion that I put forward was that, since there were only two or three points that may need clarification, rather than appoint an arbitrator perhaps Dr. Picard should be invited to come back and answer questions to clear up these points. As I said earlier, collective agreements often need clarification. Yesterday, in answer to a question, I indicated that the employers had said they would accept that proposal and would be guided by whatever Dr. Picard said. However, the longshoremen, in no uncertain terms, have said they will not have Dr. Picard. They said he was through and they would not take his clarification or interpretation.

A suggestion was made that we might appoint an administrator to run the hiring hall set-up in Montreal. I ask in all seriousness, what good would it do to appoint an

administrator or a port controller if there are still three or four points on which, rightly or wrongly, each side takes such a determined stand, and particularly when the shipping federation says, why should we waste further time on this thing when we know it is going to be abortive? It is all very well to say that the Minister of Labour or his department should move in. I have not hesitated to move in where there is a prospect of some results, and I will be dealing with the remarks of the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) in a few minutes.

I did not hesitate to move into this situation last year in May and again in June. I had no hesitation in moving in on the serious situation which was developing in connection with the operation of our railways last summer. I had no hesitation in moving in on the Vancouver situation when I brought about a settlement acting as mediator. This was one of the most difficult disputes that we have ever had in Canada. Fortunately I had good, sound advice and support in the course of those negotiations. This morning the hon. member for Lapointe said that the minister had accused him of being irresponsible. I repeat that he was irresponsible when he refused to allow an emergency debate to clear up a situation that had existed for several weeks in Vancouver when millions of dollars worth of oranges and perishable goods were being destroyed.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member rises on a question of privilege. I suggest to hon. members that we are abusing the rules when we seek, on the basis of a question of privilege, to correct what we consider to be a misstatement by another hon. member who has the floor. This has never been and cannot be a question of privilege. Having said that, I will hear what the hon. member for Lapointe has to say.

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, this is truly a question of privilege because it is based on the fact that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) has ascribed to me intentions I did not have and statements I did not make.

Mr. Speaker, the minister says that I raised objections and delayed consideration