

This dispute has gone on for at least a year and there has been a lock-out for several months. The activities of the whole region are being very adversely affected. For that reason we agree with the minister that it is time the government acted. We feel that the proposal he has made, namely, that the employees and employers be told that work must begin as soon as this bill is passed, will give the two sides until some time in December to try to reach agreement between themselves on the matters which are still unsettled. Failing such agreement, an arbitrator will be appointed to look into the matter and to make findings and recommendations, and these will be binding on both parties.

As I said at the beginning, we are not enamoured of or enthusiastic about this kind of intervention, but we accept the fact that there is a time when governments have a responsibility to the community as a whole to act when the effects of a stoppage are too serious. We believe the time has come for the government to act, and that parliament should support the government.

Let me conclude by saying that we accept this principle with regard to this particular case. I hope there are no more cases like it, but if in the future there should be, we will take the same view as we have in the past. We will look at the situation as it exists at the time the matter arises. If we are dealing with this specific case, and if it is not a precedent for cases in the future, or the beginning of a permanent method of solving disputes put forward by the government, we are prepared to go along with this bill and to co-operate in ensuring its rapid passage.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Charles-Eugène Dionne (Kamouraska):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with much attention to the explanations given by the minister in his statement. I also watched the reactions of opposition members, and I realize that by general admission this is not the best procedure. But in the circumstances, it is time the government decide on some approach, especially since, under the legislation before us, the main interested parties would still have some time before them to think things over and look for what might be considered the best solution.

To my unfortunate amazement, there are still people who believe the remedy to labour-management problems is a work stoppage. This is rather strange, because the fact is that everything has been accomplished in our world through work. How can strikes solve problems? That is beyond me! For this reason, I suggest from time to time to the government they should try and come up with a labour legislation that would fit the workers involved, a comprehensive legislation to avoid the ever more numerous strikes that cause economic upheavals affecting everyone, even those who are responsible for deciding and legislating in the labour-management area. But the government appear to be reluctant. It would seem they are afraid of labour unions. Apparently, they fear they will lose the labour vote at the next election. The legislation before us is not in the interest of the people, but rather in the interest of the

### *Halifax Operations Act*

next election. We must strive for a fairer solution to the various problems now facing us. The only possible reason for a strike is an attempt to regain lost time in the race against soaring prices. But the right to strike is not basic to the current situation. It is something linked to various general illnesses, and it is becoming a tool of hypothetical efficiency. No one knows whether it will succeed or not. And generally speaking, strikes are aimed at the people who pay, rather than those who deprive. I shall deal with the main causes and the multiplication of strikes. First the workers say: Our wages are not high enough. Management replies: If we increase your wages, we shall not be able to make ends meet. Let us pause for a moment and examine the main cause, as we should. It is found in the financial system which deprives us of all sorts of things. It often happens that by abusing the means employed we contribute to preventing ourselves from achieving the objectives we have set, because of resulting clashes in labour relations. We have noticed agreements turn to disagreements. It is true: we have seen it happen. We can see it within the postal service: there was agreement and now there is disagreement.

Some negotiators persist in clamoring for reinstatement of their rights which results in a lot of contestation often based on misunderstanding and degenerates most of the time into confusion. I jumped on the occasion to point out to the House that the time has come for the government to act. This is no time for squabbles between political parties but time to try to find a real formula, acceptable first of all to the workers, because they need a decent wage to live, and also to management which has to be able to bank on normal activities in their field of operation.

So, in that atmosphere of constraints and industrial conflicts and others, with legislation permeated with timorous inspiration in the face of finance that dominates, it is difficult to find a solution at the present time that can be fair to employers and employees alike. Once again governments will have to become aware of their responsibilities and implement real legislation that does not smack of the domination of the profiteers, nor of the fear of what some unions might do, but legislation that is understanding, honest, humane, just and truly social, which guarantees an equitable distribution of profits and reasonable income to the workers.

With the group of experts governments have at their disposal, it should be possible to draft legislation that is clear in style so that the interested parties can understand it. It is worth a try. That is the price we will have to pay for peace in labour relations.

We evidently support the government's approach in this bill. I do not feel it would be possible to adopt another. We therefore support this bill and hope that it will be adopted soon, so that normal activities in the port of Halifax may resume.

● (1420)

[*English*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. Members:** Question.