

never intended to resolve this issue equitably and which now wants to pretend that these workers have to bear the burden of the inconvenience that may be out there for Canadians so it can use a hammer to solve this dispute. That has to be said clearly.

The other issue I want to make clear is one I want the minister to answer. The minister has talked about ships in the St. Lawrence Seaway and ships in the Great Lakes. We all understand that. We are all aware of the reality of the Canadian climate. But I want him to make clear that the reality is that the vast majority, if not all—and I have just had this confirmed—of Canadian vessels involved in hauling Canadian goods, whether it be wheat, grain or whatever, are ice-hardened vessels. They are quite capable, all of them, in the time remaining in the season given the likely timing of the government's bill, of moving out of that system.

What the minister is really doing today is making a plea—and it is understandable from his portfolio's point of view—that the foreign vessels not ice-hardened, that are not built for Canadian conditions and Canadian winters, get a chance to get out. Is that not what is really happening when we are being told by the Minister of Transport or the government that Canadian farmers or Canadian producers may be hurt? That is a fallacy because Canadian boats and Canadian traffic because of ice-hardened capabilities can move out of that St. Lawrence Seaway system.

If the government wants the strike resolved it can do it in a matter of hours. Bargain honestly and bargain fairly. Would the minister not agree?

**Mr. Bouchard (Roberval):** Madam Speaker, I think the member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte would try to find any kind of excuse not to support the bill. It is up to him, but I would like to repeat what I said.

• (1640 )

He said it is fallacious. I believe it is also fallacious to try to explain that three week's from the closure of the St. Lawrence Seaway we have 121 ships in the system with no possibility of determining exactly what the icing conditions will be. We have no possibility of knowing what the weather conditions will be within the next two or three weeks.

I face, as the Minister of Transport, the fact that a few of those ships could be stalled in the system all winter

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and what that represents in terms of consequences. I think everybody in this House has to keep in mind that we have two or three weeks. As the Minister of Transport I just have to ask the House to give me the possibility of using the ice-breakers in a way that we can, for example, free the ice-jam that we have under the bridge of Trois Rivières at the present time.

I have heard in this House so many times people talking about the environment. I said we have 121 ships in the system. When those ships are cruising or sitting in the water, there is the danger that that could create an environmental disaster. And now we have an icy St. Lawrence River. We have problems of icing in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, in the St. John River in New Brunswick, and it could be worse and worse tomorrow and the day after. And I am asking if that is a fallacious argument? I just ask the House to consider the fact which is in front of me. We have the reality. We do not have the time. We do not have weeks and weeks and weeks. We have days. The day after we had a disaster those same members would say that the minister did not take his responsibility, that he did not try to free the St. Lawrence River.

I do what I have to do. I tell Canadians that it is very serious when the Opposition does not understand. The President of Treasury Board explained this morning how 95 per cent of those people have already accepted working conditions but the demand is for 17.4 per cent when we have given 4 per cent to the others. Between that reality and the economic reality of Canada, with the ice conditions in the St. Lawrence Seaway and the weather conditions we could face, my choice is very quick. I need the legislation to keep jobs for Canadians in that sector and to keep the economy of this country healthy.

**Mr. Brewin:** Madam Speaker, I have a couple of points I would like to put to the minister. First, the government has repeated time and time again the overly simplistic suggestion that the union here is asking for 17 per cent when in fact it is asking for 17 per cent over 42 months. The two sides are not too far apart on money. There is a possibility of getting a settlement. The government did not have to wait until the dead of winter, it had two years to negotiate this. It could have got something settled.

The workers here have been out on strike for three and a half weeks. By the time this legislation is through, if the government persists in using closure to get it