under federal jurisdiction. So what happened at Ogilvie? Because it was federally regulated, Quebec's anti–scab legislation did not apply.

This dispute, which was settled only recently, went on and on, despite all attempts to reach a settlement. I remember raising the matter as the member for Lévis. Although Ogilvie is mainly in Montreal, there was an impact across Quebec. During the notorious dispute at CN, we told the Minister of Labour: You do not seem as anxious to appoint a mediator to settle the grain dispute at Ogilvie in the Port of Montreal.

The dispute dragged on and on and on, until it was settled quite recently, but it went on for many months, and in fact it lasted about 18 months, if I am not mistaken.

So what did the workers at Ogilvie want? What caused the dispute? It seems they just wanted to maintain their working conditions, not improve them, only maintain them. The company wanted to backtrack on conditions that had already been agreed to.

In the circumstances, it was perfectly normal for the employees to act as they did. Not many people, and I would even include members opposite and, in fact, all members of the House of Commons, would be prepared to go back to what conditions were in the past. And that was the problem.

I could mention another case in Quebec to illustrate my point. I come from the riding of Lévis. MIL Davie, a marine construction firm, comes under the Quebec Labour Code because the sector is regulated by the province. The company does not have the right to hire strike breakers. However, a small shipyard like the one at Les Méchins, which does ship repairs and is thus in a related sector, would be subject to the Canada Labour Code because of the federal government's jurisdiction over marine traffic, and so the anti–scab legislation would not apply.

Today, these shipyards are being invited to bid for the same jobs but they are not subject to the same conditions, the same bargaining rules.

• (1840)

In the minute I have left I would like to say that—and it might look odd for a Bloc member involved in the current referendum campaign to encourage the federal government to pass anti–scab legislation—if the yes vote wins, Quebec will do what it likes once it is sovereign. We can envisage that.

However, at the same time, as the areas of labour relations are often interrelated and we want an open economy, we feel that our future neighbour, Canada, should be subject to the same conditions so that the rules for business—we are talking here of free trade—are consistent.

This is to be expected, and we want the members opposite to vote in favour of this legislation so that workers in all fields, particularly industry, enjoy the same conditions in this part of the North American continent.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be here tonight in my first duties as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and to speak briefly on Bill C–317.

I thank the member for Manicouagan for bringing this important bill forward. The member proposes to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Public Service Staff Relations Act. As I read it, there are two very important objectives here.

The first objective is to ban replacement workers when there is a strike or lockout in the public service or at an employer covered under the Canada Labour Code. The second objective is to ensure that essential public services are maintained in the event of a strike or lockout in the public service or at a crown corporation.

The issues raised in the bill are difficult and complicated. It deals with peoples' pocketbooks, their livelihoods and their rights. To those involved in labour relations, it will also influence Canada's economic and social progress.

Thus the bill merits our time and consideration. Any decisions taken on these issues have to be carefully thought through. Bill C–317 proposes to change part I of the Canada Labour Code. This part of the code is meant to achieve a balance of power between labour and management.

As a former union executive I know a careful balance is needed to keep the collective bargaining process running. Therefore I do not think it is wise to isolate or grab on to certain issues without considering the effect on the big picture. That is the point I want to emphasize.

As I am sure the hon. member is aware, there has not been a comprehensive review of the industrial relations provisions of the labour code in over 20 years. The last amendments were made in 1972 and before that we have to go back to 1948.

In 1972 amendments were made involving the certification process, new provisions to require good faith bargaining, the extension of the unfair labour practices section and increasing the authority of the Canada Labour Relations Board. Most important in my mind, especially in light of today's economy, was the inclusion of a section on technological change. This meant that unless a collective agreement dealt with the issue, an employer was required to give 90 days notice of any new technology likely to impact on working conditions or job security of a significant number of employees. That notice was lengthened in 1984 to 120 days.