

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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WAYS AND MEANS**MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE**

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.) moved that a Ways and Means motion relating to certain measures announced in the February 1995 budget, laid upon the table on Tuesday, March 14, be concurred in.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion agreed to on division.

(Motion agreed to.)

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[Translation]

WEST COAST PORTS OPERATIONS ACT, 1995

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.) moved that Bill C-74, an act respecting the supervision of longshoring and related operations at west coast ports, be read the second time and, pursuant to order adopted earlier this day, referred to committee of the whole.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to introduce the West Coast Ports Operations Act, 1995, which provides for the supervision of longshoring and related operations at ports on the west coast of Canada. The labour dispute that led to the tabling of this bill is between the Waterfront Foremen Employers' Association and local 514 of the ship and dock foremen of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union.

The association has a membership of 16 companies that employ members of the union in longshoring operations in British Columbia. The union has about 500 members and represents all unionized foremen employed in freight handling operations in British Columbia. The collective agreement between the parties expired on December 31, 1992, and the labour dispute was caused by the inability of the parties to renew the agreement.

After direct talks between the parties broke off, a conciliator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service was appointed on August 5, 1993 to help the parties settle their differences. The conciliator met the parties during the period from September 1993 to March 1994, and as a result the parties

resumed negotiations in March. Conciliation sessions started again in April 1994 and went on until August last year. On October 18, 1994, the parties were informed of the appointment of Mark Thompson as conciliation commissioner in this labour dispute.

On February 10, 1995, after a series of meetings which took place over a period of four months, the conciliation commissioner transmitted his report to the parties. The employer indicated that, on the whole, he agreed with what the report contained. The union, however, rejected the report as a basis for a settlement. Following a meeting of both parties on March 10, union members went on strike on March 13. However, they indicated they were willing to allow the loading of grain shipments. The work stoppage occurred after the employer informed the union that it intended to impose the recommendations contained in the conciliation commissioner's report as of March 20, 1995.

● (1850)

Following the walk-out by the union members, the employer imposed a lock-out in all ports on the west coast, at 1 a.m. on March 15, thus halting the movement of all goods, including grain.

This report contains specific recommendations forming a solid base for settling these negotiations, but it also sheds light on the problem colouring labour-management relations in the port of Vancouver for years.

In his report, Mr. Thompson indicates that repeated intervention by senior government officials in labour disputes in the port of Vancouver have made the parties less interested in reaching an agreement on their own. The commissioner also points out that since Parliament has not allowed work stoppages in the port of Vancouver to continue for more than a few days, the parties are tempted to hold off any agreement until an act is passed or some other form of intervention taken. Unfortunately, this is also what is happening in the present dispute.

For years, the port of Vancouver has been dealing with disputes involving various occupational groups, including longshoremen, foremen, grain handlers and other workers. And all of us in this House know we have had to intervene. Unfortunately, I see the current situation requiring exactly the same type of measure.

This subject would not have been my choice for my maiden speech in the House of Commons, but I have never backed away from problems, and I am not going to start now. My colleagues on both sides of the House are well aware that grain traffic is moving faster than ever before in the ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert. I congratulate the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Transport on developing and implementing changes that have significantly improved the efficiency of the grain transportation network in the west.