

and I very much regret that a settlement was not reached through the normal bargaining process.

I think management has taken a rigid position. The workers were prepared to submit to arbitration. It is correct to say that they put forward the name of Mr. Justice Emmett Hall as their choice for an arbitrator, and I do not think that should have cancelled the negotiations towards finding an arbitrator. Certainly, I believe that the union, while that was their first choice, would have been prepared to consider alternative names had they been put forward.

Management has refused to budge on the question of computer operators and has refused to agree that they should be in any way members of the union.

The Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable John Turner, issued a press release in which he encouraged the Minister of Labour to meet the two sides in the dispute to try to work out an agreement with regard to an arbitrator. I personally think that that would have been a useful meeting to have undertaken. However, it is clear that the government has taken the position that both parties are to blame.

Yesterday, in the House of Commons, the minister said that these parties have effectively said to the Canadian public, "We don't care about your interests or about collective bargaining." He said, "This attitude is absolutely unacceptable . . . What is unacceptable is that the parties have made up their minds that they are not going to settle their differences through the democratic mechanisms which are provided by our Labour Code."

Honourable senators, it seems to me that it was management who decided that under no circumstances would they agree to arbitration of the issue respecting workers who operate the computers.

I can understand the position taken by the union. The union membership has been reduced from 115 to 64. In terms of computer operators, outside the union the number increased from 6 to 15, a 150 per cent increase. Therefore, the union feels that it has to take a position to protect, if it can, the union membership.

On December 4, 1987, in a press release having to do with the Vancouver situation, Mr. Henry Kancs is quoted as having said:

We knew we had to sign a three-year agreement and settle for less than a five per cent increase over the three years if we were to retain the confidence and support of the producing farmers. Their welfare has to be as much concern to us as our welfare.

● (1520)

In a press release of January 13 the union had this to say:

We are not on strike for money. We recently signed a three-year agreement with the five Vancouver elevators without government intervention. We simply want the same agreement and practices in Prince Rupert. The Company has used the excuse of the introduction of technological change to eliminate 64 of 115 union positions while increasing supervisors from 6 to 15 and con-

tracting out work. At the same time, our productivity in tonnes and tonnes per man is increasing phenomenally.

This dispute is about jobs—union jobs. The sacrifices our members are making on the picket line are not for selfish reasons. It is so union members can share in the future world of computer technology and not become a relic of the past like the grain shovels we once used. We are intelligent enough to participate in the future. We already do it at other elevators.

Honourable senators, I think this is a major issue. Whether the operation of computers in this industry or in other industries is to be exclusively a function of management, and is not to form part of a normal collective bargaining agreement, is a matter of principle. In my judgment, until that particular principle is decided upon we will have more and more strikes and disputes with that as the central issue.

From the standpoint of the grain producers, exports over this period have not been going forward, and they are of a value of \$70 million. Nobody can say that the farmers have had taken from them \$70 million that they will never recover, because the fact is that the physical grain has not been lost; it has not been destroyed. The physical grain over the last few weeks has not gone to market, and that grain, as I have said, is valued at \$70 million.

When I was the minister in charge of the Wheat Board there was a dispute at Thunder Bay which lasted for some two weeks. After the settlement of that dispute, the workers returned to work with enthusiasm. Their productivity was very high, and they succeeded in exporting out of Thunder Bay in 50 weeks the largest quantity of grain in history. This terminal was designed to handle 3.5 million tonnes annually. Last year it handled 4.2 million tonnes. The workers performed well—they performed in such a way that they dealt with 20 per cent over what was stated to be the normal capacity of that terminal.

Honourable senators, I am sure that these workers will return to work and will perform well. I am sure they will get the grain moving. Let us hope for the recovery of a large part if not, perhaps, all of the \$70 million worth of grain that over this period of time has not been moving forward to market.

Honourable senators, I think the situation we find ourselves in today is absolutely unnecessary. Management, led by the cooperatives—led by the wheat pools of which I am a strong and consistent supporter—has dug in its heels and has said that it will not submit willingly to arbitration as part of this process. I do not think that the two or three people who occupy the top management positions are really speaking for the 100,000 farmers who are the members of these cooperatives. I think there would be a much greater chance of an amicable settlement of this dispute all round if the farmers themselves took part in the process.

Cooperative management sometimes is no more able to foresee the future than can the management of some private corporations. Management did not see that the fertilizer industry was going to be in trouble. So Western Cooperative