

Labour Dispute at Montreal

us wait a while and see how things develop. But it is absolutely false to tell us that he will have nothing to do with it, that it is none of his business.

I should like to ask the hon. minister to intervene, to summon the two parties and see where the trouble lies, where the problem or difficulty started. We had an arbitrator and a commission last year, in 1966, to do so: the Picard commission. Who has failed in applying the recommendations of the report? Who is responsible: The employees or the employer? We should know. Why should the minister, who endorsed the Picard report, now wash his hands of the whole matter, when it may well be that something is lacking in the report or in its implementation?

It is his duty as minister to look the situation over and to correct it. The minister is the only one who can solve it; I am quite familiar with problems of this type; quite a few of them have arisen in the past. Instead of ironing themselves out, they get progressively worse. We are reaching the point where nothing can be solved. The two parties take up their positions and, finally, parliament is compelled to step in through legislative action.

So, Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot afford to let the situation deteriorate in this economic area. Then, some people wonder why grumblings are being heard in some provinces, particularly in Quebec. We voice our concern over separatism, the fate of Canada, we discuss changes in the constitution, bilingualism, anything you want. In the last analysis, it is simply—

Mr. Speaker: I would remind the hon. member that we are now considering a motion concerning the port of Montreal. The hon. member is talking about separatism. It seems to me that we have wandered away from the question under consideration far enough for us to come back to it.

Mr. Langlois (Mégantic): Mr. Speaker, I readily accept your remarks and the point you have made. However, if some hon. members see no relation between separatism and the economic troubles we have in our part of the country, I must say frankly and sincerely that I do. Moreover, I believe it is my duty to express my opinions in the house. The minister may not express his, but I do mine, and in good faith. I am convinced that it is my duty to do so.

The Chair may hold a different view. I may perhaps hope that my views are not

justified but complete work stoppage in the port of Montreal is something that the economy neither of Quebec nor of Canada can afford at this time.

I make the connection with separatism because that may be remote but it is effective and dangerous. And possibly if more strikes were settled and fewer problems arose, or if more security were available for Montreal longshoremen, as well as elsewhere in the country, because such a strike affects all producers, possibly there might be fewer problems in Canada, problems of separatism, independence and all you can wish for.

In closing, I should ask the minister to kindly reconsider his position and to intervene in the conflict, not to impose a solution, but at least to try and discuss with the parties involved so as to arrive at an agreement before it is too late and before parliament is forced to take the situation in hand.

Mr. Gérald Laniel (Beauharnois-Salaberry): Mr. Speaker, I understand very well the reasons why the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot (Mr. Ricard) moved the adjournment of the house this morning to deal with the situation in the port of Montreal.

I am sure that everyone, and that is obvious from the views expressed here, is concerned about the long and short term repercussions that this situation might have. Hon. members from the various parts of the country are asking themselves questions. The newspapers have told us that the National Harbours Board has asked the government to intervene. The Canadian Exporters Association is worried. People worry about what is happening to the image of the port of Montreal throughout the world. But, in short, what is the problem?

• (12:50 p.m.)

It is said that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) does not want to assume his responsibilities, but I can tell the house that we have in the person of the present Minister of Labour a man who, during the last few years, has done a great deal to settle disputes and has taken unusual steps to prevent situations such as the one we are facing today. I shall even congratulate him for everything he has accomplished in that area over the years.

In 1966, he took position on that question by way of ministerial action, an action in conjunction with the government; it was then found possible to give longshoremen a