

Government Orders

We can only hope that everything will turn out well. I hope so. But the trouble with this debate is that the government tried to suppress it. The government tried to suppress the debate. This government does not like debate. It does not like dissenting opinions. This government will only give in to its own impulses.

In concluding, we will vote against this legislation, of course, and we hope that in the future, the Department of Labour will take a more objective stand and will act more responsibly with respect to its obligations to the parties, both employees and employers, because there are not only employers, there are also employees.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are sitting here today on a Sunday. I am told, for the first time in the history of Parliament at a cost of \$25,000 an hour.

Why are we here? We are here because of very vindictive, narrow minded, malicious partisan politics brought on us by members of the Bloc Quebecois. They have done it for two reasons.

They have done it, and it seems appropriate, to try to get their separatist movement back on the tracks. It seems they do not care what else they derail in the process of doing it. Also they have done it to hit the Liberal Minister of Labour in her home area of the Montreal docks. This is the kind of vindictive partisan politics that makes this place something less than the public has a right to expect. That is the reason we are here this weekend.

The reason we are here at all, however, is that the Liberal government did not act as quickly on the matter as it could and did not act long before it happened to prevent it from happening in the first place.

The reason that we come to Parliament is twofold. First, it is to bring solutions for new problems such as the drunk defence. It was something that was not anticipated but it came about and requires legislation to repair it. Second, we come here to provide solutions to all problems brought forward by the parties and people of the past, problems such as the budget.

We try to find permanent solutions to different problems, not stop gap ones. It does little good to sit in Parliament and come up with a solution that will have to be repeated year after year. The solution to the transportation problem has to be a permanent one. The Liberals have failed to do it in the past and their current legislation fails to address the permanent need for a solution as well.

Transportation strikes are not new. Turning to recent history the Vancouver port was out in 1994 and back to work legislation was brought in. What was wrong with the legislation? There were two things wrong. First, as in this case it took too long to

come forward. There was a lot of economic pain and suffering by people far beyond the port of Vancouver. We will never recover from some of that damage. Second, the Liberals brought in something relatively new by way of settlement, final settlement offer legislation.

• (1340)

That is something I favour but it was wrong in the way they did it in that specific case, the reason being that the two parties had bargained on the basis of an old system. When they were given the new system they were not given the opportunity to go back to the table to try to resolve the problem using the benefits of the new type of settlement. The concept was good but the method in which it was done was not as good as it could have been.

Then there was another Vancouver strike in 1995. That time it took only two days for the Liberals to act to get the port, which is very crucial to the entire Canadian transportation structure, back to work.

What is interesting is that we have the Bloc Quebecois sitting down the way, these brand new saviours of the labour movement in Canada. These were identical situations. In neither case did we hear a single word from the Bloc Quebecois. I reject its rationale for being the great voice of labour this time. It is nothing but petty partisan politics.

Now we have a rail strike affecting all of Canada. The Liberal legislation that is coming forward does not resolve the short term wrong because of the method of arbitration. The Liberals have gone back on the solution they used in Vancouver in 1994 and have gone to straight binding arbitration. Hopefully the two parties will be able to get together during the mediation period and resolve some of the differences. However the most outstanding issue, that of job security, is unlikely to be resolved through regular bargaining across the table.

When it comes time to move to the arbitration settlement we have an arbitration council set up with one representative of the union, one representative of the company which is owned by the government, and one representative selected by the government. Is there anyone in the House who has any doubt about how the arbitration will come out?

The whole way in which labour negotiations are carried out is unbalanced and unfair in our modern society. If the employees of a whole chain of grocery stores in the Ottawa area including all the surrounding communities went out on strike or were locked out for some reason, it would be primarily between the employees and the owners of the store. People would be inconvenienced but they have alternatives. Life would go on. The general economy would not be hurt.

However it is absolutely unthinkable that we would have the police standing by watching someone being mugged or raped because the police were out on strike. It is equally unthinkable that we would have a fireman standing by on a sidewalk