

Government Orders

or processors in that province of Manitoba is affected in a very significant way. We have to deal with that. Why did we not deal with that tonight and get it over with for the industry?

We do appreciate that the minister has brought the legislation before this assembly. We give her full credit and compliment her for that and compliment the composition of the legislation as it is. It has met one of the needs of western Canadians. The minister deserves that credit.

I also on behalf of my colleagues want to give the minister credit for the fact that she and the government intend to set up a commission or some body to look at ways we can deal with this problem on a basis that does not require legislation or a knee-jerk reaction every time workers walk off the job or there is a lockout, as is the case at the present time. I give the government full credit for that.

In all the years federal governments have dealt with this issue they have always brought legislation in to put the workers back to work or prevent or stop a lockout and they stopped there. They were afraid to challenge the unions on this very basic question. They were afraid to do what they thought would disturb the collective bargaining process and they wanted to maintain the integrity of that process.

Western Canadian farmers face a very unique situation. It is different. We as farmers in the west are victims of the collective bargaining process. We pay the bills. When there is demurrage to be paid we pay it as farmers. When there is loss of sales we pay it as farmers. Whatever the losses are we are the ones who pay. It is not management. It is not the unions. They do not pay any of it. There are no losses on their part. It is the person who ships the raw product, grain and other agricultural products, or our processed products into the export market. We are the victims.

The collective bargaining process as it now stands is completely unfair. The right to strike in that process does not fit that circumstance at all.

• (2200)

There must be a different approach. I have recommended in private members' Bill C-262 that we look at a process by which there is binding arbitration and that each party provides to the arbitrator a final position.

The arbitrator then would choose one position or the other and at that the work continues and there is an agreement for both of the parties. That is one of the options we should look at. Maybe there are other options.

The minister has indicated there will be a commission. The matter will be studied. I hope that is not a diversion or a delay. I

hope the minister and Prime Minister are very sincere that there will be recommendations that will come into either the June portion of this session or into the fall session of the House whereby we deal with the problem once and for all.

It can be done without violating what we talked about, the collective bargaining agreement process by which management and employees can settle their various disputes.

Agriculture is different from General Motors, for example. General Motors has management. Its employees produce automobiles. If the automobiles are not manufactured and sold, management and employees are affected. It does not affect the other people beyond that. That is the very basic difference in terms of these two processes.

We intend to support this legislation. We want the government to support it and move quickly on it. We want it to deal with the other circumstances affecting the export of agriculture and other export products. We want that to happen as quickly as possible. If it needs to be done tomorrow let us do it tomorrow and not wait until there is a major crisis in our economy.

We are looking forward to some major changes in legislation this fall that will deal with this problem on a long term basis.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on something I was speaking about earlier but which was exacerbated by a speech given by a Liberal member who spoke about the national interest.

In the context of talking about the national interest, a double standard exists between how we regard labour when it pursues its economic self-interest and how we regard capital when it pursues its economic self-interest.

When money markets act in ways that hold the country hostage, we do not take the same offence as some members take when a trade union is said to be holding the economy hostage in its economic self-interest.

What I was pleading for was that there not be this double standard that if we want to hold that everyone should be accountable to the common good or to the national interest, we have to do that with some uniformity.

We cannot say that trade unions or working people should be accountable to the national interest but the money marketeers, the currency traders and the money speculators can do what they like, act in their own economic self-interest and that our only role as a Parliament is to appease them, ask them what they want next, do whatever they want so that they will invest in our country. We need to stop having this double standard.

Picking up on the comment that the Liberal member made about national interest, this is also an interesting concept given globalization and free trade agreements.