

The point that should never be forgotten is that that was a blanket and arbitrary kind of rule. It does not take into account past profitability of a company or that Irving, Abitibi, and every other paper company in this country can afford more than a 14 per cent increase in the first year of the wage contract and quite legitimately so. The government is out to put the law of the land behind the employers and to point out to employers that they dare not defy.

● (2130)

Employers, in turn, can say to their workers, "What is the point of asking for more than 10 per cent because, as you know, we shall be fined if we go beyond it? What is the point of going on strike? We, as employers, have the law behind us and we just have to hold out until you people starve or until"—as is probably the case with the paper workers—"you reach the end of the financial resources at your disposal."

A strike is a last resort: it is not entered into lightly. When we look at what is being endured by the families of the paper workers, we see evidence of this. But it is a right, it is a hard-earned right, and it is a right in law. Through its anti-inflation legislation the government is destroying the validity of a strike because it is saying to the companies, "Don't worry about your workers going on strike. We, through the Anti-Inflation Board, have put the law of the land behind you. The guidelines will be enforced and the workers will soon get the message that there is no point in striking."

When you strip away all the rhetoric used by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro), what they say comes down to one thing: the government is going to fight inflation on the backs of the workers. It is setting out, in a systematic way, to pick on one union at a time, to crush them as they have attempted to crush the postal workers, to make examples of them or, as in the case with the paper workers and their families, to deny them a legitimate wage increase based on historic wage relationships and the profitability of the company.

We have not seen one price roll-back under this anti-inflation program, yet we have seen roll-back after roll-back in the case of wage settlements. To pretend, in these circumstances, that we still have free collective bargaining is to bury one's head in the sand. The government is embarking on a course of confrontation. It is promoting civil disturbances because it is undermining a right which is established in law, the right of workers to take strike action if they consider it to be necessary. What we are considering is a backward step, a regrettable program, and I urge the people of this country to stand up and call for the withdrawal of such an inequitable program.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Environment and Minister of Fisheries): Mr. Speaker, I understand quite well that—

An hon. Member: He knows nothing about conciliation!

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): No, I am quite sure that I do not know about it as much as the hon. member, but as I spent 23 years there, I am perhaps entitled to speak about

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it and perhaps as intelligently as the hon. member who cannot refrain from shouting!

Mr. Speaker, I wish to deal briefly with the problem confronting us as well as the Canadian people and which affects workers. I would like to do so not in a demagogic manner but as sensibly as possible.

When it is objected, as we have just heard, that workers have suffered during a long strike, that they have lost their house, that they have paid high interest rates, I understand it because I have probably been through that more than the hon. member. However, we cannot choose at the present time between such a situation and an ideal situation, because we are going through an inflationary period and some people are suffering while some non-union workers are losing their house and their means of living. The question is not to decide whether workers lose something when they go on strike.

In the past, there was no control over the so-called free collective bargaining. I noted it myself when I was a leader of the asbestos strike. There was no obstacle to free collective bargaining. However, the workers remained on strike for four months and a half. We saw those things. The legislation does not necessarily edict that, precisely because our collective bargaining system gives rise to a conflict situation.

And as to the historical link in pay rates, Mr. Speaker, really one must have never negotiated in his life to know that there is no such thing as historical links in pay rates because those links are continuously upset by the relative strength of the parties. At a certain moment, the employer is stronger because the cycle is downward, so he can prevent salary increases. At another moment, the union is the stronger and it gets salary increases unheard of before.

Take the case of the teachers in the province of Quebec and even Canada as a whole. Can you imagine that in 1959 the relationship in salaries with those paid in industry was comparable to what it is today? Everything is changed altogether. And if you want to talk about the pulp and paper industry, fine. The relationship between the pay rates of papermakers who traditionally were represented by the International Brotherhood of Papermakers and the salaries paid to other employees at the plant who were represented by the Pulp and Sulphite Workers of America have always been different because precisely employers preferred to give 10, 15 or 20 per cent to papermakers and force the guys with the pulp and sulphite workers to follow, which resulted in depressed salaries for the pulp and sulphite guys and very high salaries for papermakers.

Do you know how much a machine tender earns, Mr. Speaker? Eleven dollars an hour, and I do not blame them for it. That represents \$22,000 a year, without counting overtime. I do not say that it is excessive, I simply say that comparisons are a hoax.

Now the legislation is passed, Mr. Speaker. I find it to be imperfect and I would not be prepared to die for that anti-inflation legislation. What choice do we have in front of inflation? If we let it run away, of course, everyone will say: What is the government doing against inflation? People on fixed incomes, unorganized people will suffer from inflation. The organized workers are not the ones who will suffer, but the unorganized will.