

*Labour Dispute at Montreal*

that this year import restrictions in the United Kingdom were eased for the first time in many years. This meant a larger market than usual available to an industry whose export markets are absolutely vital. In this context we must look at the things which have happened in rapid confusion over the last few weeks.

The pound sterling has been devalued. While this may not have an immediate impact on the export market this year, the future implications are very serious. In addition a surcharge has been imposed on freight rates from the St. Lawrence ports, a very significant surcharge of 25 per cent clear across the board on all goods moving through those ports, because of the frustration of the shippers who have learned that they cannot move goods freely through those ports. On top of that we have had virtually a complete shutdown of the docks, as a result of which goods that have already moved to the port of Montreal for shipment are in danger of spoiling there before they reach market. The implications for the future are very great.

I sympathize with the minister in the statement he made yesterday, when he suggested that both sides to the dispute act responsibly and use the grievance procedure available to them and attempt to make it work. But we realize that by means of a great variety of legislation during the last several years we have been engaged in the process of chipping away at individual and private responsibility in many fields. We have now reached the point where we cannot expect a prompt and decisive result to spring from the minister's hopes, hopes with which I have every sympathy.

● (11:50 a.m.)

The industry of which I have been speaking made a remarkable drive in recent years to bring its operations up to date. It did this with the full co-operation of the provincial and federal departments of agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture who is listening to this debate, knows the concern of the individual producers throughout the valley to modernize their operations, and he knows the measures this house has taken in areas such as crop insurance—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I believe I should remind the hon. member and perhaps others that we are now debating an allegedly urgent situation at the port of Montreal. The hon. member does not seem to be dealing with that matter at all.

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**Mr. Johnston:** With all deference, Mr. Speaker, I think the relevance of my remarks will be clear in a moment.

The industry in the province of British Columbia has improved its operations to the point where it can compete with any in the world. It is on top of this particular competitive field at this time. However, the shipping industry in the ports of Canada is still in the dark ages. The frustration is compounded when any industry in this country which is competitive is impeded at the point where the goods leave this country. That is the relevance of my remarks, and I am sure they will be repeated by spokesmen using other industries as specific examples during this debate.

I would urge the minister to intervene in this debate. If the necessary legislation does not exist to solve this problem it should be brought in as emergency legislation, and brought in quickly. In addition, during the course of the next parliamentary year and prior to the month of November next we should have legislation sufficiently comprehensive and compelling to prevent this annual occurrence.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Laprise (Chapleau):** Mr. Speaker, I think that I will just be making some brief remarks on this occasion.

I thank the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe Bagot (Mr. Ricard) for having moved this adjournment motion to discuss such a serious and important matter. Our group would have preferred it if the debate had originated on the other side of the house, and I think that the minister should have taken the opportunity yesterday or today to make an important statement on the present circumstances in the Montreal harbour.

I think that the minister should take the opportunity this afternoon to make a statement on what he intends to do to end this crisis which affects not only the longshoremen but also the export-based economy of the province of Quebec. We want to export our surplus products to give impetus to business in the area served by the port of Montreal, and if we cannot do so because of crises which are more and more frequent, the economy in this area will get worse and worse.

From the court injunction of this morning, it is obvious that one of the parties concerned has not respected important clauses of a contract. If it is so, I think that the minister