

*Grain Handlers' Strike*

Economic instability will drive workers into a position where they will have no choice but to disregard their contractual obligations and to strike regardless of the consequences.

He also said this could result in breakdown of the collective bargaining system. We all know he is right. Workers are now disregarding existing contractual obligations, ignoring back to work orders, ignoring court injunctions and government legislation to end legal strikes. In these circumstances, one could not fault the minister when he screamed for the formation of a body to resolve this question, or his intention to invite business, labour and government officials to form a continuing body to study labour relations and to intensify the examination of the collective bargaining process.

I want to know what happened to the Woods task force report, the Freedman report regarding the public service and all their recommendations. Are they to gather dust, in the usual manner, at the expense of the taxpayer? In any event, I thank the minister for adopting in a very devious way part of our policy which calls for a public interest disputes commission such as recommended in the Woods report. I refer the minister to our policy which is found on pages 4 and 5 of "The World of Work" prepared for the last election, under the heading "making the collective bargaining process work and safeguarding public interest". I assure the minister that he will find it most rewarding and informative.

We were very concerned about deterioration of the collective bargaining process, we were concerned about protection of the public interest, and we were very concerned about the movement of essential services. In that regard we adopted the principle indicated in the Woods report, which I understand the minister is now trying to steal bit by bit. Instead, he should be saying that the government will bring forward legislation to appoint a commission independent of government, particularly of this government, composed of representatives of the consumer, labour and management, in order that we can determine what are essential services, to assist the parties and thereby bring about solutions and remedies to improve the collective bargaining process.

I thank the minister, also, for his initiative in calling a meeting of labour, management and government, but I believe he is very naive if he plans to meet the other parties without having any anti-inflationary policy and expects a meaningful discussion to result. That is the crux of the matter. In that regard, it is my view that neither labour nor management will budge one inch. The meeting will be doomed from the start; surely the minister is aware of this. Surely the minister and his front bench colleagues are aware that this country is crying out in desperation for any kind of step—at this point I am looking at the Minister of Finance—which would show that they are aware of the damaging effect of our 11 per cent runaway inflation.

These groups are looking for leadership in their fight against inflation, for some bold initiative, not the same old reply that inflation is licked, or inflation is a world phenomenon, which I heard the Minister of Finance say today and which only means that little can be done. We need some reassessment on that side. Make no bones about it, the government is in one awful mess.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[Mr. Alexander.]

**Mr. Alexander:** The sooner the government approaches this matter with some credibility and honesty, the sooner our country will return to some stability and order. The current legislation holds many unpleasant ramifications. For instance, there is little doubt that it ignores completely great concerns of labour and management with regard to the need for increased productivity, greater efficiency, worker incentives and communication.

The present circumstances surrounding grain handling, with all its ramifications—the minister mentioned this—including worker unrest and dissatisfaction, demand that those concerned come up with long-term solutions which will bring some stability and order to the collection, movement and loading of grain. This legislation ignores these problems and, therefore, by implication condones and perpetuates conditions as they exist, notwithstanding the announcement of the minister this afternoon regarding an industrial commission. Why could he not have incorporated that in this bill? Is that an impossibility? They have all the brains over there—so they say, Mr. Speaker. Why did the minister not incorporate that in this bill? It would have given this whole exercise some meaning. Or am I wrong in terms of procedure? All they are doing is using their powers to coerce the workers back into an unworkable, dispute-ridden system until they obtain the legal right to walk out again. We should be just as concerned about the long-term approach to grain handling.

● (1600)

In light of this and in keeping with what the minister has indicated today, I demand that an industrial administrator be appointed immediately to inquire into every aspect of grain handling, with terms of reference related at least to the matters I have mentioned. As a matter of fact, you could add to that the government's mishandling of this entire situation.

The current dispute between the grain workers and the Canadian grain elevator companies, the names of which have been disclosed by the minister, has many other unpleasant ramifications. For instance, there is very little doubt in my mind that the settlement proposed by the Perry report will be inflationary, despite the calculation made by any party involved, whether it be 61 per cent, 54 per cent, 47 per cent or 40 per cent. Any settlement in this matter will have far reaching and severe effects on the economy of this country.

The government, however, does not appear to recognize the serious inflationary consequences inherent in such a settlement. In fact, the Minister of Labour is quoted as saying that this particular settlement would not be excessive in the context of labour contracts negotiated in British Columbia over the past few months, and he reiterated this today. But the British Columbia Employers' Council has another opinion. In a recent telegram to the Minister of Labour and the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, the council said that the settlement would indeed be "excessively inflationary in the context of the inflationary spiral and the ripple effects of such a settlement".

The grain companies contend that this settlement will equal a 61 per cent increase over a two-year period if all costs are calculated. The British Columbia Employers'