

modal connections of transportation. Such a committee would come up with a comprehensive plan for immediate implementation rather than a master plan for 25 years in the future. I urge the House to make this a top priority item for the agenda of the Transport Committee which is meeting tomorrow. This Member had better go to the committee meeting and speak to this.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, government Members seem to be indicating that they want to keep the port open and that the way to do that is to remove, through legislation and the process which follows, the container clause from the collective agreement. It is interesting that the Government acts so vigorously when faced with a labour dispute. Although this sort of crisis management approach to the port may keep it open, I wonder whether it is going to keep it competitive and keep business flowing through it. Is there not more to having a good, competitive port than simply fiddling around with a collective agreement?

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, it is very important to remember that this is a lock-out. Over a month ago the employers chose to lock out. I commend the Minister for intervening. They were persuaded to have a 30-day cooling off period. Unfortunately, nine days before the cooling off period was over they were talking about locking out again. That was not very conducive to settling anything.

I agree with my colleague who talks about crisis management techniques. That is exactly what I was saying earlier. Positive solutions demand a careful analysis of the problem and a comprehensive approach involving a number of different levels of transportation and port users. I urge the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux), the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Crosbie) and the Government in general to do what they can through the Transport Committee and the Port of Vancouver to ensure that planning is done to solve the problem. This band-aid approach is no good for anyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The period for questions and comments is now terminated.

Mr. Gerry St. Germain (Mission—Port Moody): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-24, the Maintenance of Ports Operations Act, 1986. We all recognize that decisive action is required given the widespread consequences of further disruptions to West Coast operations. I want to praise the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) for his concern, compassion and prompt decision and sound leadership in handling this issue.

● (1750)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. St. Germain: Certainly the issue has been referred to as a crisis. Logically, we would not be taking this action if it was not a crisis, but would be allowing the parties to resolve the situation.

Maintenance of Ports Operations Act, 1986

As has been pointed out by the Minister of Labour, Governments should intervene in the collective bargaining process only as a court of last resource, and only after all voluntary, mediation and conciliation efforts have proven ineffective, and only where the parties have clearly failed.

As one who has represented labour as a union president, I understand this fact better than most in the House. This type of action should only be taken as the last resort. No government can continue to allow unresolved private differences to impact on the public interest so seriously.

Part V of the Canada Labour Code which governs industrial relations at the federal level sets out a structure to regulate union-management relations which provides the parties directly concerned with every opportunity to resolve their differences with minimal government intervention. The Canada Labour Code has evolved over the years, taking into account different social and economic circumstances, always recognizing that parties directly involved are best able to resolve their differences.

In view of the fact that in some circumstances the parties may need assistance in resolving particularly difficult problems, the Code makes available the provision of conciliation and mediation mechanisms to facilitate union-management resolution of sensitive and complex issues.

Negotiations for a renewal agreement between the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union-Canadian Area began in October, 1985. There followed a series of direct negotiations between the parties themselves, and then there was a series of meetings at which conciliation assistance was provided. Following the unsuccessful efforts of the conciliation officer, the Department of Labour appointed a Conciliation Commissioner to make further effort at bringing the parties together.

The Conciliation Commissioner, Mr. Dalton Larson, conducted hearings and received briefs and finally submitted a report to the Minister of Labour, which was released to the parties in early September. At the beginning of October, the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association implemented a lock-out, which is their legal right under the Canada Labour Code. Shortly thereafter, the lock-out was ended to give further collective bargaining a chance. Toward the end of October, the Minister of Labour showed the leadership to which I referred in my opening remarks and appointed two mediators in an effort to help the parties find a solution to their differences. This effort unfortunately did not succeed and neither have admonishments by the Minister of Labour to both disputants.

In the situation before us, as can be seen, the parties have made use of extensive conciliation and mediation assistance without a successful outcome. It is in such exceptional circumstances that a Government must take action in the best interests of the general public. An extended work stoppage on the West Coast could only damage Canada's international