

*Supply—Labour*

its present functions, I am firmly convinced that in the fields that continue as its responsibility the Department of Labour can be counted on to make a greater contribution to the economic and social development of this country.

**Mr. Rapp:** Mr. Chairman, may I just ask one question. What effect does the longshoremen's strike have on the loading of the grain? I understand that as far as loading of grain is concerned all that has to be done is to stick a spout in the boat, pull a string and down it goes. However, will the longshoremen's strike affect the export of our grain?

**Mr. Nicholson:** That is not an easy question to answer, Mr. Chairman. The strike has occurred during the early part of the shipping season. I would be hopeful, if we can get this very disastrous strike behind us, that we may be able to make up the 19 days during which shipping activities have been interfered with. But any long protraction of the strike certainly will have very serious adverse effects on the movement of grain.

**Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West):** Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the minister a question while his mind is still on the point. Has consideration been given by his department to the use of compulsory arbitration as a means of settling disputes, rather than resorting to strike action, as has been the case for many years?

**Mr. Nicholson:** I am going to suggest that I take note of questions and deal with them perhaps at the end of the period. However, I think this particular question merits a special answer and I would be glad to give one.

Very serious consideration has been given to this matter by the department and by experienced departmental officials over a period of several years. As a member of cabinet I know something of the difficulties that we have had in trying to work out and find an acceptable formula. If you really believe, as I happen to, in the importance and the significance of collective bargaining, which enables management and labour to sit down on opposite sides of the table and unburden their hearts and take strong positions if necessary, it is difficult to say in all cases compulsory arbitration would be necessary, or advisable.

On the other hand, I think—and I am speaking only for myself, certainly not for the government, nor do I even express the consensus of my department—there are many

[Mr. Nicholson.]

cases where the national interest is at stake. I can think of safety and security in the air line industry, for instance, where weather services have to be maintained. Then there is the movement of passengers and freight in many cases on our railroads. It is just as important perhaps, in my view, to have compulsory arbitration in these fields as in certain aspects of civil service activities, as proposed in the legislation that is now before this house.

I cannot give the hon. member a definite answer, but I can assure him—and this is why I made the appeal earlier today—that any constructive suggestions, which any member of this house or any other person may have to make as to how we might solve this extremely difficult question, when our national interests and economy are at stake, would be very welcome.

[Translation]

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Chairman—

[English]

**Mr. Knowles:** Are you making your main speech?

**Mr. Caouette:** I was recognized by the Chair and I should be given the opportunity to say what I have to say.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Chairman, I think thus far you have recognized a couple of members who have just asked questions. If we are now to have the round of main speakers, do we not follow the usual routine and hear from the Conservatives first?

**Mr. Caouette:** I have been recognized.

**The Acting Chairman (Mr. Dubé):** I have recognized the hon. member for Villeneuve.

**Mr. Churchill:** Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I have raised this matter on several occasions and I will continue to raise it. The Conservative opposition of this house constitutes 96 members. We are entitled to recognition in greater numbers than the members of a small group of eight or nine. I think in a case like this, when the minister has made a statement on his estimates, the first person to make a reply should be a member of the major party in opposition in this house, and others should take their turn.

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to say what I have to say in English so that my hon. friend from Winnipeg South Centre can understand, because if I speak in French he will not understand.