

*Strike of Grain Handlers*

ing union but ignored by elevator companies, which, he said, had made no open negotiations with the union.

Also, he said, an appeal to the federal government to end the strike resulted in no action.

I point out that Mr. Young said in that interview that it was time to quit stalling about this strike. On March 5 we had the first statement in this house from the Minister of Labour. There was not very much in that statement, which will be found at page 2635 of *Hansard*, and which was in effect a short summary of what had taken place up to that time. The next day, on March 6, Mr. Phelps, to whom I referred a few moments ago, went to Vancouver and from there appealed to the Department of Labour to make some endeavour to get this strike settled.

On March 8, two days later, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) sent Mr. Bernard Wilson of the Department of Labour out to Vancouver. That was the first action of which we are aware taken by that department. I hold in my hand a dispatch appearing in the *Vancouver Province* of March 9. In this we find the following:

This is the first direct action taken by the federal labour department. The companies and the union have not met since the strike broke 22 days ago.

Mr. Wilson went to Vancouver three weeks, mind you, after the strike had begun. Then on March 9 we had another statement by the minister in the house which merely reported that he had sent Mr. Wilson to the coast. Three days later, on March 12, Mr. Wilson suggested proposals for a settlement but was unable to bring about an agreement between the parties concerned.

Press dispatches reported these moves by Mr. Wilson, and of course reported a continued failure to bring about a settlement. Then on March 16 we find press dispatches from the west coast intimating that the whole question was being held back until the threatened strike at the lakehead, in Ontario, had been forestalled.

A dispatch in the *Vancouver Province* of March 16 contains this paragraph:

Meanwhile, observers in Ottawa say the government's efforts to assist the parties in reaching a settlement are complicated by the fact that grain handlers at the great lakes head, members of different union than the Vancouver workers, have not yet signed their agreement.

They say the lakehead unions may be marking time, and may make no effort to sign an agreement until the situation here is clarified.

Whether or not that press dispatch is correct I do not know. The Department of Labour may have been waiting to see what happened at Fort William and Port Arthur. In any event there is a considerable body of opinion which believes that is one reason for the delay.

Two days later, on March 18, the proposal which had been put forward by Mr. Wilson in Vancouver was rejected by both the employers and the union. Mr. Wilson had this to say to the press:

It is evident the parties have not yet reached common ground and are not likely to do so in the near future if left to their own devices.

On the same day the minister made a report to the house in which he commented on the failure to bring about a settlement. Two days later, on March 20, Mr. Wilson left Vancouver; but before doing so he submitted in writing a proposal to the employers and to the union. The main feature of the proposal was that the conflict over wages should be left to an arbitrator, whose decision would be binding on both parties. Mr. Wilson came back to Ottawa and, so far as I know, that was the end of the attempts to bring about a settlement.

As is indicated at page 3230 of *Hansard* for March 24, the Minister of Labour reported on Mr. Wilson's trip. Then on April 1, only last week, I asked him in the house whether he had anything further to report, and his reply is to be found at page 3497 of *Hansard*. Incidentally, the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. McIvor) will recall that he rose in his place and made a short statement in which he praised the minister for preventing the strike at the lakehead. I followed the hon. member with a question as to what had happened on the west coast, to which the minister replied:

As hon. members will remember, a proposal was addressed to both parties by our representative, Mr. Wilson, before he left Vancouver, that recommended that agreement on several points be reached, that work be renewed and that the dispute over the wage increase be referred to an arbitrator who would be chosen by both parties and whose decision would be final. I have not had a final report as to the views of the two parties regarding that proposal.

Then I asked this question:

Has the minister given any thought to having the parties come to Ottawa in the hope that this strike can also be settled?

To that question the minister replied:

Before coming to a decision on that matter, I should like to have a reply from the two parties with respect to what is, in my opinion, a very sound proposal for settlement that is now in their hands.

That answer was given on April 1. There may have been some developments in the meantime, but no indication is contained in press dispatches that the strike is any nearer settlement than it has been throughout. Meantime the strike at the lakehead has been prevented. That was done by calling the parties here to Ottawa; as a result of their coming here the threatened strike was called off.