

Feed Grain

previously. The Gold solution really applied to the hours of work and was satisfactory. However, it did not solve the problem of the technology being used on the waterfront. Although we have been faced with this problem at least twice a year, we have not arrived at any solution.

I do not believe that, every time a segment of the population gets into trouble, parliament should be asked to do the negotiating. If we do, we will get into the kind of trouble we now have with this longshoremen's strike. The problem is that when we settled the longshoremen's strike last year we did not take into account the rising cost of living. Therefore these people were worse off after we settled their contract than were their fellow workers in St. John's who were able to negotiate a cost of living escalator clause before the end of their contract. That eliminated the problem for those people. If we pass legislation we will continue to have that kind of problem. I am very concerned because we are not able to handle the problem. We are spending a lot of money. We established a board to regulate. However, we are still running into this kind of problem.

The Eastern Feed Grain Board has the right to bring in grain from Prescott, corn from the United States, and grain from Thunder Bay in any mix it wishes. The Feed Grain Trade Assistance Act will pick up the tab for those shipments, but they must be made by rail as opposed to bringing them in by boat.

I suggest that the government is not blameless in this instance. If the feed grain agency is not working right, we should know it. The Minister of Agriculture was asked about this. He should have been prepared four or five days ago to give a detailed description of the efforts being made by the two or three agencies directly under his control. That information should have been made available to all members of this House. It is not good enough to write it out for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to give to the House when there is an emergency. That information should have been given to the House when it was requested. All members are interested in heading off the problems we face, and we are going to have a number of these problems.

The Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) is here this evening. I suggest the next problem will be in his department. But the problem is again being attacked in the wrong way. It has been decided that by using the position of the minister the problem will be solved. However, if there is going to be a problem, parliament should know the position the government intends to take so that it can try to do something about negotiating that problem.

In every strike in which the federal government has been involved, the cabinet has put more money into the settlement rather than setting up legitimate eye to eye negotiations so that those on both sides of the fence know exactly where they stand. We have already legislated the longshoremen back to work. It seems foolish to compound the difficulty by again sending them back to work.

What do we do now? Do we send them back to work with Gold's suggestion for a three year contract, 57 per cent across the board, and add to that a cost of living clause, or do we negotiate what kind of jobs the longshoremen will do, what kind of work in which they will engage, and the type of responsibility the NEA will have to the employees?

[Mr. Peters.]

Are we going to negotiate the details of contracts? If we do not do that we will get into the same box we got into last time.

The reason for this debate is that the government has not taken parliament into its confidence. We have not been asked for our views on how to solve this particular problem. Some useful advice will come out of this debate. It would have been free for the asking if the government has sought it before the problem developed. When questions are asked in the House about government departments or agencies, the ministers responsible should give full reports.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to take very long. I know that the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser), and others, want to participate. Nor do I want to address myself too deeply to the specific merits of the strike in Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec.

I usually agree with the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) on a philosophical base. I do so again this evening. If I had to agree with him on a factual base, I would know a lot less about the strike than when it first occurred. The fact is that there has not been a legal labour strike in the port of Montreal since 1966. I do not think the same can be said about many other ports in the world.

The last time we legislated a settlement in the House of Commons that involved the ports of Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec, it was to bring to an end an illegal work stoppage on the part of the workers undertaken for reasons best known to themselves, when they decided to ignore a collective agreement which had been signed in good faith. They decided that the quickest way of settling the dispute, which could have been settled through a grievance procedure was simply to walk off the job. That is hardly the type of action that is in the best interests of the labour movement or industrial relations in general.

There are very good reasons why I do not want to get involved in discussing the problems of Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec, which some people know. I have had a close relationship with the Port of Montreal as a member for Montreal, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, and as a Minister of Labour. In each of those roles I participated in the disputes that were occurring there in the early sixties as the industry began its transition from being a labour-intensive industry to the capital intensive industry it is today. Whatever the hon. member may say about industrial democracy, and about employers in the Port of Montreal, there is one thing he cannot take away from those employers; the fact is that when they found it necessary to reduce the work force by 800 people they at least paid each and every one of those workers a \$12,000 indemnity. I should like to see more employers, including the government, put that into practice.

● (2140)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: The hon. member for Timiskaming is perfectly right when he says that each time parliament has to settle a legal strike we are weakening the collective bargaining process. He is a legitimate labour representative; he understands this, as I think most of us do, and I