

Government Orders

unemployment insurance. However we let these kinds of things go on year after year.

Bless the minister for coming up with the idea to put through some legislation that will put an end to this situation at last. Let us hope it is truly meant and let us hope that irresponsible opposition parties will fall into line and support logical legislation of this nature.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition of the New Democratic Party to this back to work legislation. I suppose it will come as no surprise to those who are familiar with the stance that the NDP has taken in the past on back to work legislation.

I was in the House on a number of occasions when we dealt with some of the back to work legislation members referred to earlier tonight. Unfortunately, I say to the member for Wild Rose, I have heard other ministers of labour say that they had to do something about bringing forward a system to ensure that they would not have to do this as often as they do.

I have two things to say in that regard. I hope this time the government will try to bring in such a system. However we ought not to assume the system it brings forward is one we will automatically agree with. We may have problems with it but certainly the government ought to make an effort in that regard.

It was interesting to listen to some of the remarks members of the Bloc Quebecois, the official opposition, made on this matter. Earlier they had an opportunity in the House to delay the legislation and they did not use it. When the government invoked the standing order that permitted it to proceed without unanimous consent, if 10 Bloc Quebecois members had risen at the appropriate time to object we would not be dealing with the legislation tonight. There seems to be a bit of a gap between rhetoric and reality when it comes to the attitude of the official opposition in this regard.

With respect to the government and its sense of urgency which it did not display yesterday but which it has in abundance today, its sense of urgency is related to the movement of grain and the importance of agriculture. We all know how the argument goes.

I wonder why the government always refuses to take seriously and hold up to public attention that in many of these cases, as was the case yesterday and today before the lockout, the workers were willing to continue moving grain. I know this does not help other shippers but grain is often held up as the reason for the urgency.

In these situations I have seen workers and unions repeatedly offer to keep moving grain. It is the companies, the employers, that will not tolerate the situation because they want the government to step in. They rely on it. They know if grain were to keep moving the political pressure for government intervention would disappear. Therefore they lock out the employees to make

sure the grain cannot keep moving to create the appropriate political scenario so the government then has in some sense a false sense of urgency. If the government really had a sense of urgency about moving grain, it would respond to the offer of the employees in the situation and make sure it was accepted by the company. But the government never does that. It never ever does that. That is something I wanted to put on record.

• (1940)

When I last checked about an hour ago bargaining was continuing between the union and management. It would certainly be ironic if by the time we finished tonight they had an agreement. Let us hope so. It is always better if something can be negotiated rather than brought to a conclusion by legislation.

Again going back to the extent to which the government often bases its arguments about its concern about moving grain—and I know my Reform colleagues will not agree with me—this is the same government that announced in the budget the end of the Crow benefit. In the judgment of many, and not just the New Democratic Party, that had an extremely deleterious effect on western Canadian farmers.

We are supposed to believe the crocodile tears that are being offered on the other side for western Canadian farmers when only a couple of weeks ago, in their budget of February 27, the Liberals completed the job that they started in 1983 in the House when they were in government. It was the Liberal government of that day, I would remind western Canadian farmers who might be listening, that began the demise of the Crow rate.

I was here then and part of that great parliamentary battle. That was before the Tory government changed all the rules so that opposition could not have great parliamentary battles any more. We cannot delay things. We cannot allow time for public opinion to develop. We cannot do all the things opposition parties used to be able to do to give public opinion time to mobilize on an issue. It does take time.

It was the Liberals who started doing the job on the Crow rate then and they are finishing it now by getting rid of the Crow benefit. I do not swallow it when I hear Liberal cabinet ministers or Liberal members or anybody else getting up and giving me the old sob story about western Canadian grain farmers. From our point of view we believe the Liberals are doing far more harm to the agricultural community in western Canada by virtue of the policies announced in their budget than a strike on the west coast could ever do.

I would like to pick up on something the Bloc Quebecois mentioned, that is the need for anti-scab legislation in the federal jurisdiction. There is a campaign on now. I am sure the minister, even though she is new in office, will have inherited a rather large file from her predecessor of letters from all across the country, from locals, regional and provincial federations of