

*Private Members' Business*

Following an initial meeting between the consulting firm and a larger steering committee, representing not only management and labour interests but various agencies concerned with grain handling and transportation, the study was initiated. The process consisted of several phases ranging from employee questionnaires and focus groups through to the establishment of surveys and interviews with senior human resource personnel. The study focused on the educational and skill requirements of the industry and the training and reskilling available to meet such needs. It also looked at various methods of dealing with workforce adjustment within the industry and drew on the industry knowledge of the respondents to assist in predicting industry trends of the future.

During the course of the consultants' work there were regular meetings with the steering committee to ensure that the study was following the direction intended and that the methodology agreed to was being followed. The study has been finalized and will now be turned over to the original working group for consideration and action, including the possible establishment of a sectoral council for the grain storage and handling industry.

This initiative, involving both labour and management in the grain handling industry, is but one example of the co-operative approach which is being pursued by industry participants to meet the challenges they are facing. The fact that the two sides have met and constructively reviewed major human resource issues speaks volumes. Hon. members on both sides of the House should welcome this display of co-operation which we naturally hope will translate into improved labour relations within the industry.

• (1805)

Both the Ministers of Human Resources Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food should be commended for ensuring that labour has had an opportunity to play a significant role in respect of department initiatives. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has ensured that the representatives of unions involved in the grain handling and transportation system are active participants in this May 16 group which meets regularly to ensure that Canada's export grain commitments are being met and that the system is functioning well.

The Minister of Human Resources Development, in addition to the support shown for the possibility of a sectoral initiative in the western grain elevator industry, has encouraged ongoing consultation with labour unions and employers in the federal jurisdiction concerning possible amendments to the Canada Labour Code.

Earlier this year when a work stoppage involving longshoremen at the west coast ports threatened this country's reputation as a reliable exporter of grain and other commodities, the Minister of Human Resources Development introduced legislation to bring about an end to the disruption and provide for a

final settlement of issues separating the two sides. While not a popular measure, the bill introduced by the minister demonstrated the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being of western Canada's agricultural economy.

In conclusion, I would simply suggest that the measures contained in the bill before us are inappropriate and do not reflect current reality in the grain handling industry. Removing the collective bargaining rights of workers and replacing them with imposed arbitration will do nothing to further the positive thrust of the initiatives mentioned earlier.

This government is a strong supporter of free collective bargaining but recognizes that there are occasions when lengthy work stoppage in the grain handling industry could pose significant economic losses for the agricultural economy, as was the case in the recent longshoring dispute. In such cases the government is prepared to intervene in disputes and ensure the resumption of operations and the settlement of the dispute. This type of commitment should preclude the need for the measures proposed in Bill C-262.

I would therefore urge all hon. members not to support the proposed legislation.

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that I do support the private member's bill C-262 because I think there has come a time for real action in the labour management disputes that we have seen in the handling of grain for export markets.

To think that since 1966 the government has had to legislate these workers back to work tells us that the current system is not working. As much as the previous speaker would tell us that they do not want to deny anybody the right to collective bargaining, the point is that we want to enforce and give some motivation for management and labour to arrive at a negotiated settlement within the collective bargaining process. This whole bill is designed to give that a whole push forward. It is to say that if one does not bargain within the collective bargaining system then one may not enjoy the rules imposed by the arbitration process.

What we are talking about here is a simple dispute settlement mechanism. Right now when the two sides cannot agree they appoint an arbitrator. He then sits down, looks at the one side, looks at the other side, sees what is being offered and makes some kind of reasonable determination somewhere between these two sides. It fosters a desire by one side or both to make exorbitant demands or to deny reasonable demands. The arbitrator then has to choose and make a settlement.

If they cannot come to some conclusion within the negotiation process that is free and open, if they agree not to agree, then this bill will require that each put forth their final proposal. Whatever that is they will put forth a final proposal, free, open, entirely their own.