

Labour Conditions

see the day when I would stand up for the Irvings or the Taylors in this House. I had a chance to talk to that gentleman and get some facts. He told me that the paper companies had formed an association, that the association had asked him to join the club which would control workers' wages and keep them within the guidelines. He said he refused because he felt he could always paddle his own canoe and settle with his workers as he had in the past. He said he felt he could afford to pay 23.8 per cent. Actually he said it was 21 per cent but the Anti-Inflation Board took into account contributions to pension plan and overtime, and said it was 23.8 per cent. At any rate Mr. Irving said he felt he could afford that settlement.

I also discovered on my fact finding trip that the paper companies colluded one with another. As evidence, we have secured a document with the signatures of four paper companies attached to it. Let me read one paragraph of that document:

The undersigned undertake in such circumstances to:

(a) secure the competitiveness of the industry by satisfying to the best of their production capacity the fine paper product requirements for the customers of that or those manufacturer(s) which has (have) ceased operations as a result of a strike; and

(b) offset the latter's cost of negotiations through financial support.

That agreement was entered into in 1973. The establishment of the Anti-Inflation Board, and the guidelines, exactly suited the paper companies. They were prepared with machinery with which to control wages. Obviously, the association was a cartel. That is the power against which the workers were aligned.

The workers are poor people who could ill afford to strike; but they did strike. There comes a time when one must stand for principle. I know the Liberals know little about principle. I also know that there comes a time when a man must stand for principle. Often we have seen wives of workers recognize that principle and show solidarity with their menfolk on strike by supporting the strike. I have met trade unionists involved with the movement at the federal level and always thought they were mild, reasonable men. They are too logical, and not at all left wing maoists, Marxists, or whatever one calls them. I always hoped they would show more spunk and more backbone in dealing with the country's corporations. I am glad to see the Minister of Labour return to the House. As I said, I challenge him to tell railway workers how the government's program will work.

To revert to what I was saying, those leaders of the trade union movement in this country have been forced, by the government's action, to withdraw their participation in the very system by which they can correct labour legislation passed in this country. Things must be pretty serious if they are pushed to such extremes. As I said, I was always impressed by their quiet approach, by the mild attitude which has characterized their relationships with the government. I always hoped they would be more aggressive. Now we find that they have taken this hard position.

What has been the cause, Mr. Speaker? The immediate cause is the government's enactment of that infamous Bill C-73, by which the government intervened in the free collective bargaining process. In the present instance the administrator of the anti-inflation program, Mr. Tansley, has fined the Irving paper company \$125,000.

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

What was the company's crime? Mr. Irving was paying his workers what he had agreed. I have often said, "Fine companies which do not do the right thing by their workers." Now we find that the government fines companies which have done the right thing by their workers. I really do not understand Liberal thinking.

Mr. Benjamin: Nobody does.

Mr. Rodriguez: It is a sort of "Alice in Wonderland", thinking. But then the government is consistently anti-labour. Mr. Tansley made his decision and brought down his judgment. And whom does he name in the judgment? He names the Irving paper company. Do the workers have the right to appeal Mr. Tansley's decision? That is the question.

I distinctly recall the Prime Minister saying this afternoon that he was dealing with the root causes of inflation and it seemed only proper to him, in law, that action should be taken against the person who is directly causing inflation. I distinctly remember the Prime Minister saying this afternoon, in answer to my leader's question, that if the employer is paying wages higher than those permitted by the guidelines, it seemed only proper to issue an order against the employer, not the employee.

I also recall the Prime Minister saying that the employer should have the right to appeal if he does not agree with the Order. According to the Prime Minister, the person paying salaries higher than those permitted by the guidelines is the real cause of inflation. Well, that is a new one. I never heard that before, never heard of an employer who agrees to pay his workers a fair wage as being the cause of inflation. And there is no appeal from that.

The Minister of the Environment (Mr. Marchand (Langelier)), who has held pretty well every portfolio in the cabinet, suggested that there is not even an historical relationship. He ruled it out completely.

I can well understand the confusion of the country's trade union movement. First the Anti-Inflation Board says that it is all right for teachers to get 30 per cent in a one year contract, Falconbridge workers to get 18 per cent in a two year contract, and CUPW workers 30 per cent in a two year contract. Then they turn around and say that 23 per cent is too much for paperworkers. Where is the pattern, consistency, and logic to that? What it boils down to is that in every case the worker is being blamed for inflation. He is made the scapegoat when in effect it is the government's inability to deal with the economy so that the resources of the country can be used effectively.

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It reminds me of how we think of the rape victim. We always blame the victim for causing the problem. It is the same situation here. We do not blame the corporations for pushing up prices as a result of which the workers are forced to bargain for higher wages in order to keep abreast of the rising cost of living. When you have the same corporate group financing the Liberal party and you have a lobby in the Senate, what can you expect? Can you expect legislation that is just for workers? Not on your life!

I found out something that is very interesting with regard to the Paperworkers Union when I was in New