

Labour Dispute at Montreal

my party as well as others, have expressed their opinion.

However, I have been struck by something on which I particularly wish to insist. Up until now, not too many members from the island of Montreal have expressed their opinion in the course of this debate.

I have no ulterior motive in saying that, Mr. Speaker. However, those members are right on the spot and should be more familiar with the problem than we who are further away. For example, I would like to know the opinion of the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey), to whose services the government constantly has recourse to settle certain problems or to get out of tough spots. I know that the hon. member for Verdun is a rather serious man, whose judgment can generally be trusted, and I think his opinion would be most appreciated at this time.

[English]

I hope the hon. member for Verdun will not hold it against me if I make this request of him. In the circumstances his participation in this debate as a member from an area close to the Montreal docks would be most helpful in view of his knowledge of the subject. It would help not only to get the government out of trouble but also to get some of his constituents out of trouble.

● (12:40 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the hon. member for Mégantic whether he has noticed that only three members from the island of Montreal are here today, for this important debate, and that the others are not interested at all—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Grégoire: Has the hon. member noticed that too?

Mr. Langlois (Mégantic): Mr. Speaker, I had indeed noticed it. I am not as blind as some hon. members opposite who do not see the importance of that problem as other hon. members do.

I know that the minister does not intend, according to the answer he gave yesterday to the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr), to intervene in the conflict, and that he leaves it to the parties to work out a solution to their problem.

Mr. Speaker, I have noted a fact which is often distressing; before taking action to settle a dispute or a problem, the government

[Mr. Langlois (Mégantic).]

waits until it degenerates into a serious crisis and then, when there is practically no way to settle it, administrators, arbitrators, etc. have to be appointed. Why does the minister not intervene at this time to settle the dispute? Why is the minister afraid to become involved in this? It is his job, why does he not do it?

Mr. Speaker, what kind of occult forces are at play behind those strikes, those conflicts, particularly this one, to make the minister refuse to deal with it. He knows very well that the economy cannot afford another strike. There have been enough, why wait until that conflict becomes worse before intervening directly?

What the minister said yesterday is true; we do not have time to deal with all those problems. But if parliament does not have time to consider them, it is the minister's duty and role to do so. It is up to the minister to act immediately so that parliament may not be compelled to take steps in the near future.

When the minister is discharging his duties off-handedly, the government is compelled afterwards to pass legislation to settle those problems. As those responsibilities are not discharged, because nobody cares about the matter a crisis breaks out. The house must then be adjourned to settle the problem.

Due to the problems which we are facing at the present time, such as credit restriction, the rise in the cost of living and all the other factors giving rise to inflation, the risks of a recession which are evident for those who have insight, the economic difficulties, especially in the eastern part of the country—it must not be forgotten that the dispute in the Montreal harbour does not only affect the province of Quebec, but also all Canadian producers who use the port of Montreal and the St. Lawrence seaway—I think that the minister cannot afford to ignore a problem and to let it develop into a national or serious crisis. If the house adjourned today under standing order 26, it is because this problem is of national concern, otherwise Mr. Speaker would not have accepted the motion. In this connection, Mr. Speaker, I do not question your judgment, but that of the minister.

I readily believe that the minister does not have to worry about such matters ahead of time. However, the answer he gave yesterday to the effect that he had no intention to settle the problem or to intervene was rather clear. It would have been better for him to say: let