

Therefore, the House will now revert to consideration of Bill C-12 dealing with grain handling operations.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### WEST COAST GRAIN HANDLING OPERATIONS ACT, 1974

#### MEASURE TO SECURE THE RESUMPTION OF OPERATIONS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Munro (Hamilton East) that Bill C-12, to provide for the resumption of grain handling operations on the west coast of Canada, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, since this is the first time I have had the chance to speak since the session started, may I first of all heartily congratulate the Speaker who will chair this session's debates and, hopefully, several future debates as well.

I wish to assure him that he will enjoy our wholehearted co-operation. The experience which I have gleaned through a few years in the House has led me to understand that the Speaker, despite all his qualities, needs the co-operation of all hon. members in order to discharge his fairly onerous duty and chair the debates for the good not only of the members, but also of all Canadians, whose representatives we are here, so that the debates can be led to their anticipated results.

Mr. Speaker, we are today starting to study a bill providing for the settlement of a strike which has been going on for several weeks on the west coast. The examination of this bill does not occur in a traditional setting. We had to adjourn the debate on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne to face a situation which has suddenly become serious. This strike has been going on for several weeks, as I stated earlier. Early in August, the Social Credit Party of Canada asked the government to resume parliamentary work in order to bring about an end to this strike, since we had foreseen that it would be a lengthy one. Our experience of previous conflicts led us to doubt that this strike could be settled without the government being forced to resort to legislation.

● (1700)

However, Mr. Speaker, the government turned a deaf ear to our claims and we were not alone in this. The other parties as well as farm and trade organizations throughout Canada called for government action.

The minister just told us a moment ago that the Governor-in-Council, at the outset of the election campaign, suspended the right to strike in this Pacific port until election day because it would apparently have been detrimental to the Canadian economy. But a few weeks too late, it is realized that the government did not fear as much for the Canadian economy as for the economy of the

### Grain Handlers' Strike

Liberal party, because if a strike could affect the Canadian economy during the election campaign, its effect would be the same after the election. Still, the government waited three months before acting to put an end to this strike.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware that this method of settling a labour conflict is not too popular either with trade unions or with employers.

Given the context, this procedure is becoming popular with Canadians. And we know that a strike of such magnitude has a high cost to the nation's economy and everyone loses. Grain handlers in western ports are the first victims of the strike, but employers also lose. Grain producers, especially those in the Prairies, stand to lose much from the strike. Canadian trade also loses a great deal. On this point, I do not expect our overseas clients to be happy with those ever repeating strikes.

On August 31, 1972, a special session was called to settle a strike in western ports, quite similar to the one before us today. On August 30, 1973, almost a year to the day, a special session was called to settle a Canadian railroad strike, following an earlier one. On October 7, 1974, a special bill was passed to settle a strike in western ports, and in October 1975 we will probably be debating a bill to settle a labour dispute in some federal area, probably a harbour strike, maybe an eastern one this time involving the Atlantic or the St. Lawrence. It may be a mail strike, or a railroad or an air transport strike.

The same situation will probably occur next year.

Mr. Speaker, what are the provisions in the bill before us to settle the strike? Upon passage of the bill, the workers will be forced to go back to work. The strikers will have to return to work, the companies that imposed the lockout will have to call workers back on the job. The employees are told: You will get 87 cents more an hour starting December 1, 1973. An arbitrator is appointed to help settle the dispute, to find points of agreement, to negotiate a labour contract for the next few months.

But then, Mr. Speaker, if it is possible to appoint an arbitrator today in an attempt to solve the dispute, why could it not be done two months ago for instance to end this conflict which has caused so many problems at all levels of the Canadian economy? We waited until today. Mr. Speaker, a question still remains; probably tomorrow morning, or as soon as the bill is passed, the worker will be forced back to work, with an offer of 87 cents an hour. But how much will he get out of that increase of 87 cents an hour?

Part of this 87 cents will go to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Basford) who will hand it to the government of British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, I expect the government to take in taxes 30 to 40 per cent of that increase which the companies will be forced to pay their employees. The worker will come out of that strike a loser because management will have to raise its freight rates and profits to meet the higher wages they will have to pay. But the worker, the grain handler who will be forced back to work tomorrow morning will receive only part of that increase.

He will get only part of that increase, and come out a loser. Mr. Speaker, it is the same thing at all levels,