

Pacific Coast Longshoremen Dispute

but at the same time we must not place all the burden of continuing operations on the shoulders of labour or even, for that matter, on the shoulders of management. There must be a development of decision sharing between management and labour in these essential industries. It should be the purpose of government to develop the mechanism by which this decision sharing would be brought about, so that management and labour are each involved in a joint operation for the benefit of the Canadian people, with an equal share of responsibility for decision-making in the area of wages and working conditions.

We cannot expect labour to accept a government ukase that they should go back to work on dictated terms. Similarly, I think it is only fair to say that we cannot expect management to accept terms imposed on it by the government. But it is fair to expect that both sides should go on conducting these essential services in the interest of the whole of Canada. If there is to be a fight, it must be a fight within the confines of an operating industry.

I hope the minister will move swiftly to solve, even if temporarily, the deadlock which has been reached. The government must move to resolve this labour-management situation if we are to avoid these crippling interruptions of the economic life of our country.

Mr. Speaker: The minister has already taken part in the debate and, of course, he cannot speak again unless he has the consent of the members of the house.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour): Through you, Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank hon. members for their consent. When I rose it was to ask for such consent.

My remarks will be very brief. First, let me say I am encouraged by the observations that we have just heard from the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Cameron). I think all hon. members will recall that I was the first speaker during the present session of parliament to deal at any length with the disturbing situations which had arisen or might arise as a result of crippling work stoppages affecting essential industries in this country. When I introduced the estimates for the Department of Labour last spring I referred to some of the situations which existed then and to others about which we had been warned. I invited suggestions from members of the house regardless of party, and from the public generally, as to

what might be done to find the correct solution. Certainly, what has happened in the intervening months has confirmed me in the view I took at that time. I am delighted at the support I have received along these lines from the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands as well as from others.

As to what was said by the hon. member for Moose Mountain (Mr. Southam), I do not want this house or the Canadian public to be left with the impression that the Minister of Labour or the government have been indifferent to the serious situation on the west coast. If he would read the statements that I have made both in and out of the house during the past ten days he would reach the conclusion, I am sure, that no fair minded person could suggest the minister has shown indifference. I said on my return from Vancouver when I spoke in the house on Monday, and I have repeated it since, that there is a time when action can be taken with hope of success, and a time when it cannot. Anyone who has had experience in labour matters—and I had appreciable experience in this area before I entered the political field—knows this to be true. I told the house that when the time for action arrived I would be quite prepared to return to British Columbia. I believe the developments of the last 36 hours indicate that now is an appropriate time to do so and perhaps some results may be achieved.

• (1:40 p.m.)

In the course of this debate I received information which leads me to think that the atmosphere, while perhaps not right, is at least a little more encouraging than it was even a few hours ago. Word has been received, for instance, that some of the ships which have cargoes of fruit from the Orient and which were being diverted to other ports but might not be unloaded there, causing such a perishable commodity to suffer, may be unloaded. I have been advised that the president of the longshoremen's union has said the longshoremen will unload these oranges and that certain foremen have offered to work even without pay. That is an encouraging sign. Information has been received regarding other developments which justify and support the conclusion I reached last night that, with the assistance of the assistant deputy minister, who has broad experience in these matters, I may again intervene to advantage.

On the whole the suggestions made by hon. members have been constructive, but I should not want to leave the impression that at any time I said the appointment of a mediator