

British Columbia which generally have three points to them: first, they regret that the ultimate control of the company is in the United States and is basically a foreign company; second, they regret that labour control is really through the Canadian Labour Relations Board which, while not foreign, is some 3,000 miles away from British Columbia—British Columbia has very progressive labour legislation—and third, some people who have made submissions want the labour board in British Columbia to have control? In other words, they want the province of British Columbia to have regulatory control and that the company be taken under public ownership in British Columbia.

Would the minister confirm that those have been, the three points of many of the submissions, especially from union members in British Columbia? Would the minister briefly give us his view on the last two matters?

Mr. Regan: Madam Speaker, I think the able young member from Vancouver-Kingsway wants to lead me a little astray or on certain tangents in this matter. Let me say to him that it is true that I have, from time to time, received representations from some people in British Columbia who feel it is unfortunate that jurisdiction over labour matters in B.C. Tel is under federal jurisdiction—under the CLRB—rather than the British Columbia board. It is true that British Columbia does have some very progressive labour legislation passed by the former premier.

Mr. Kilgour: Go and shake hands.

Mr. Regan: Whatever turns you on.

Mr. Kilgour: You might as well go and give him a big kiss.

Mr. Regan: But these matters do fall under federal jurisdiction, and we also have very good labour legislation. We have an excellent labour relations board. We have a regional office in Vancouver which is very ably staffed. I think problems in the area involving a number of unions which are under that jurisdiction are well looked after by that staff.

It is also true that there have been some representations about foreign ownership of the utility, but I have already commented on that. I do not believe I have had particular representation on the subject of public ownership. In this country we have a history of utilities which are publicly owned and those which are privately owned, and as long as there is good regulation—I do not think that in essence presents a problem.

● (1540)

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Once again the minister is clearly siding with those people from the left. He is saying it is a matter of opinion whether there is excellent, leading and progressive labour legislation in British Columbia. The fact is that British Columbia has disproportionately more labour problems than any province in this country. We wonder whether the labour legislation in the

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province of British Columbia could be somewhat responsible for that.

My colleague, the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington), warned the minister that before taking sides in this dispute, he should make sure he does not dig himself in any further than he did yesterday and again today. Certainly I have faith, as does everyone else, that Mr. Kelly will come up with a report and recommendations which both sides will seriously look at.

We hope Mr. Kelly will look at other issues in this dispute having to do with technological changes which will create serious problems for the work force of this country. We on this side want to encourage these improvements while at the same time accepting some responsibility for those directly affected. We hope Mr. Kelly will look at it in that sense.

Who did the minister meet with when in British Columbia? Did he meet with anyone from the telephone company? Did he look at the regulatory structure? Did he look at the obligations placed on that company? Being a representative of a large northern constituency, I speak with some authority when I say the company has done an exemplary job of bringing telephone service to the most remote areas of the province. This creates an incredible burden on the resources of such a company. Did the minister speak with company officials? I can evaluate both sides, and I agree there has been stubbornness on both sides. Why would the minister come into this House after a two-day visit to British Columbia, knowing all about this dispute and having appointed a mediator, clearly having his mind already made up?

Mr. Regan: Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle) would not want to say anything that would be interpreted as criticism of the way in which I have discharged the responsibilities of my office and used my judgment as to when a mediator should be brought in. That is a heavy responsibility I must discharge.

I think upon reflection, if the hon. member will consider what I have said, and if he goes back home and talks to some businessmen in Prince George—

Mr. Oberle: I do that all the time.

Mr. Regan:—he will find they are expressing the same sort of concern I mirrored in this House. I do not think we should hide things under the table. If there is such a feeling, and that is a factor in the problem, it should be mentioned. However, I recognize the hon. member's genuine concern and the fact that he is as anxious as anyone that a fair settlement be achieved.

I believe the course I am following in outlining what the problems may or may not be on both sides, and in appointing a mediator of this calibre, will bring the most likely prospect of progress toward a settlement. The hon. member knows, for example, that by using judgment as to when and how quickly to intervene, we in my department were able at the last instant to avoid a threatened strike of flight attendants which would have interfered to a very substantial degree with Christmas travel plans of Canadians. Our record over the past year has