

The Address—Mr. Darling

Can we believe the government when it says inflation will be licked by October of next year? I do not think we can, which is all the more reason why the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) should speed the program up and implement it within two or three months. I am sure many members opposite feel as I do. Let them put pressure on the government so that it will find the money for this program much more quickly.

We also advocate that, in case of need, 55-year old wives of pensioners should be entitled to the pension as well. This program will not cost as much as some fear because many such wives of pensioners must obtain other financial assistance if the couple are to live in the manner to which they are entitled.

I am also happy to see that the war veterans allowance is to be increased. Again, this has happened because of pressure which has been kept on the government by my party's veterans affairs critic. This was one of my areas of interest in the previous session. The veterans have already done their fighting, and it does not seem right that they need to fight over and over again for every dollar of increased pension they receive.

I now wish to comment, and in so doing take pot shots at ministers, about labour unions which pursue their selfish aims at the expense of the public. Really, judging from what we have heard lately, the demands of some unions sound more like blackmail than demands put forward in collective bargaining. I do not believe the government has been sensitive about the rights of the majority of Canadians. It has allowed strikes in essential services to take place.

We hear a great deal from the NDP about special interest groups in industry and business. Of course we know that most of such thought is simply socialist gobbledegook. We should be directing our attention to those special interest groups in labour unions which are using blackmail and intimidation to force unreasonable demands on the government and the general public.

The unions seem to delight in keeping our country in a constant state of turmoil, and it is time we served notice on them that these minority factions will not be allowed to impose their will on the majority of Canadians every time they feel like it. Collective bargaining is not a divine right to run roughshod over the people, and unions will have to be told that they are expected and required to act just as responsibly as the rest of us. The average citizen in this country is getting impatient with irresponsible and destructive strikes, and I might go so far as to say that they are darned fed up.

I was surprised to note that the grain handlers' strike was settled by giving them a 61 per cent increase. As one of my colleagues said, that means that a sweeper in a grain elevator will now make about \$7 per hour, or close to \$12,000 per year. Many people in Canada's work force are not in unions. They have no one to speak on their behalf, and I can tell you they are giving that settlement a hard look. Other union contracts will be negotiated in the near future and some members of this House, as well as our newspapers, can take the blame for what will happen.

When we debated the grain handler's strike my friends to my left kept talking about the great big terrible grain

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companies. I may not know as much about the grain industry as my friends to my left, who seem to know everything about everything except how to get large numbers of their followers elected to this House. Their numbers are reduced and they no longer have the clout they had.

Mr. Nystrom: We have quality, not quantity.

Mr. Darling: Now they can spout their socialist philosophy because there is no danger of their being called to account.

Members to my left called the grain companies great big corporations. Actually they are co-operatives owned by farmers, as the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie) mentioned in his speech. But many members here failed to mention that. The ordinary people of Canada, who may read what has been said in that debate, may think the grain companies are the same as other great cartels and corporations. Of course we heard a great deal about corporate bums, but we no longer hear about the corporate rip-off.

Many people in Canada who work very hard cannot bargain from strength. Some make but a meagre pittance. I should like to see the wages of some people rise. Some of them could combine and use their combined clout. I would like to see their wages increased by so much an hour.

● (2130)

The minister is now faced with an Air Canada pilots' strike. At the present time they are staggering along with a paltry \$30,000 basic for the lowest paid pilot, plus fringe benefits. The super pilots are receiving \$50,000. A nice increase of 10 per cent will be coming along.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member will permit a question?

Mr. Darling: I will when I have completed my speech, Mr. Speaker.

This is what a lot of people are wondering about. Money is going to the highest paid on a percentage basis. Where is it all to come from? It will come from the poor consumer in one way or another. It will come from the old age pensioner, those on welfare and those with restricted incomes.

It is time the most fortunate in Canada stopped to think. Yesterday a good many of us overstuffed ourselves while celebrating Thanksgiving. This is a very fortunate country—let us not kid ourselves—despite unemployment, poverty, discrimination, hunger among many, and regardless of the Prime Minister.

We in this country consume, directly or indirectly, five times as much cereal grain as the average citizen in Latin America, Africa or Asia. As Canadians, we must ask ourselves some very personal questions about what our help will be to those less fortunate than us. It might be well to emphasize at this time that a great many of our own citizens are in need of a basic wage that will enable them to live in decency.