

● (2120)

I was surprised to hear the minister say that the opposition should suggest solutions to the problem. I remind him that four or five years ago we established the eastern feed grains board for the purpose of guaranteeing supplies to eastern Canada. If the minister knows the provisions of the act under which we can bring grain from the Lakehead to the eastern market and have the federal government pay the eastern feed grains board for the transportation costs, he will know what we are concerned about.

Not long ago we dealt with difficulties concerning longshoremen. Some members tonight have suggested that since the government intervened on the west coast, it should intervene on the east coast. I remind the minister that many of the problems in the ports of Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec are the result of government intervention in the last contract negotiations. I am referring to the way we settled the longshoremen's strike. When we sent the workers back, we locked them into a contract which was to run to the end of December. Not all ports were involved. The port of Saint John was not involved in that return to work legislation! workers there, in early December, negotiated for a cost of living increase and that settled the problem in the area. The legislation ending the eight-week wildcat strike in 1973 did not allow for the reopening of the contract. That is why we are facing problems at this time connected with cost of living escalator clauses.

Surely parliament will not be asked to intervene in every labour dispute. Some members suggest that strikes are not in the national interest. I suggest that not all strikes involve the national interest. Obviously, the strike we are considering affects a number of farmers in Quebec who are supposed to be serviced by the eastern feed grains board. After all, we set up this board so that it could provide, free of charge, assistance with feed grains. The government, if it so wants, can move grain to eastern Canada by rail. That movement need not cost the farmer a penny; the government can pick up the tab.

The problem we are discussing concerns, it seems to me, Quebec in particular. It concerns, more especially, the major ports, Montreal, Quebec City and Three Rivers—perhaps I ought to say Trois-Rivières—and, as well, Baie Comeau. The guarantees have been given. The machinery for settling this problem exists. Is this, then, a matter involving the national interest? Is there not legislation for dealing with it? Clearly, what has happened has inconvenienced farmers, distributors and producers who need feed grains for their operations. But the government can supply that feed grain from Thunder Bay. The mechanism exists for providing it directly to those who want it.

It is easy to criticize the government, to be wise, with hindsight, and to say we should have adopted a different or a better feed grains policy or we should have provided financial assistance. I know that what is happening may be causing hardship to certain farmers. I also know that most people are not overly concerned about labour disputes affecting others. Only when a dispute affects one directly does it become a national issue: that is the attitude of many people. I remind the House that when it intervened only one year ago to settle the dispute affecting Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec and eliminated a

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cost of living clause from the contract, it sowed the seeds for the present strike which is affecting the same ports.

Recently we were involved in some difficulties concerning longshoremen and management. Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to read an extract from the *Montreal Gazette* of October 29, 1974. The headline of the article is "Longshoremen, management talks on new contract open." A paragraph of the article reads:

"The port of Montreal is doing well and the other two are having difficulties," says one shipping agency president here. "Why should we pay for the others? Let each one stand by itself and if one port has trouble—well, then, just close it."

People who have experience with contract negotiations and have dealt with management know only too well that the general attitude is, "Well, Jack, we are all right in Montreal and to hell with you in Trois-Rivières and Quebec City." That was the management's attitude in dealing with longshoremen, and it did not help. We know that Judge Alan Gold was appointed as mediator in the Quebec longshoremen's strike and submitted his report on March 19. The report was accepted by the MEA, but rejected unanimously by the International Longshoremen's Association on March 27. Shortly after that, the Quebec minister of agriculture, Rene Toupin, sent a telegram to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) asking for an injunction ordering the 2,200 longshoremen back to work so that grain supplies to Quebec farmers would be assured. Let me point out that longshoremen are not primarily concerned about the movement of grain. One wonders why management wanted an injunction ordering the longshoremen back to work when the longshoremen were not involved in the feed grain contract.

In the present case, the longshoremen's union says that the wage proposal is not bad. It amounts to a 57 per cent increase over the three-year life of the proposed contract. So the longshoremen are doing better than members of parliament who are working on the basis of a four-year contract, so to speak. The most contentious issue, say the longshoremen, is job security. Perhaps hon. members should look at that clause because they may need to be as concerned about job security as the longshoremen.

At the present time, when we are seeing technological changes, the mechanization of industry, advanced work techniques, and so on, we have not been able to establish a satisfactory way of resolving labour-management problems. We in this country have not been able to do anything about establishing any form of industrial democracy in the negotiations we conduct between employers and employees. In the case of the longshoremen they point out that the wage increases that have been offered—and they are not bad—can be easily removed if the payment of those wages is on the basis of possible deductions from the total annual guaranteed income which they had previously, and which they were able to improve by working overtime, when necessary, without losing any of their yearly benefit.

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Under the terms of the Gold proposal, by working overtime they were, in effect, having this deducted from their annual guaranteed income. Therefore they might not be any better off at the end of the year than they were