

Government Orders

The Reform Party will be supporting back to work legislation.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his fine words. I am pleased to support this move tonight.

A number of things have crossed my mind since this affair began. I cannot help but remember the first two or three things that came to my understanding. We had some young families in Wild Rose that work for small businesses, exporters, mainly hay processors, that were laid off a week ago because the signs were coming that things were going wrong.

These people were the ones making \$9 or \$10 an hour. They do not make car payments and they do not make house payments because they cannot do that on \$9 or \$10 an hour. They have young children and are trying to survive. It is a shame that hundreds of these individuals are trying to get into the work market, trying to make a go of things, trying to stay off of welfare and doing all the right things. Suddenly there is a move about somewhere and they are being held hostage. They cannot go to work. There is nothing to do because a few people somewhere are stopping the work or not allowing the procedure to take place.

• (1930)

There is a discouraging part about it. I stood in this place less than 24 hours ago and asked if the House would consider giving unanimous consent to debate legislation requiring the workers to go back to work. The disappointing part was that right away we heard "no, no way" from the other side of the House. Good grief, here we are one night later doing exactly what I asked to do last night.

What was so unusual about getting going last night? Is it a bad deal that it happened to come from this side of the House? Did we have to wait another few hours to make sure it came from that side of the House?

Mr. Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): It has to be a Liberal idea.

Mr. Thompson: It has to be a Liberal idea; it is no good otherwise. That is a shame. What did we hear? We heard: "No way", but here we are tonight debating something we all agree on.

There was noise from the opposition as soon as I mentioned that we should debate legislation to get these people back to work. What else did I hear? I heard irresponsible from Bloc members. I will tell them what is irresponsible. It is irresponsible when 295 individuals sitting in the House continually let these kinds of things go on year after year.

I admire and commend the Minister of Labour for her move. She said tonight that we must get something in place to make certain these kinds of things do not happen again. It is a good

idea, even if it did come from the Liberal side. It is too bad they did not feel the same way last night. We could have got going a lot sooner, or maybe last year instead of letting it go for 12 days. We are just asking people to wake up.

A small business in my riding, Transfeeder, worked very hard this year to re-establish the business it lost last year. It does not employ a great number of people but it is doing its very best to help. It is part of a big picture. Last year it lost \$500,000 in sales during a 12-day strike. Since then it has tried to calm the fears of Japanese businessmen and managed to get new orders.

It is finally getting back on its feet and suddenly everything is in jeopardy because of a stoppage. This small business is really striving. Japanese businessmen are asking why Canada is allowing the stoppage to happen. They do not understand.

Mr. Blair Wright, owner of that business in Olds, Alberta, could only answer like all Canadians by saying that he did not know. Is it not a shame when we in the House of Commons receive calls from our constituents saying that they have to lay people off, things are falling apart and perishable goods are perishing? They are being held hostage. Farmers cannot move their grain. Everything is looking grim. Yet we in the House hear nothing more than silly comments like irresponsible or no way when we try to do something about it.

It is time we woke up, started to get more serious and change our attitudes in this place. Perhaps that would inspire some attitudes all over the country that might make a difference and keep the economy going the way we want to see it go.

Unfortunately if we did not do something all Mr. Wright's work would be in vain. All he has done for a year to try to get going would be in vain. He worries about his staff. Most of them are young families trying to get a start somewhere. Most of them earn a little better than minimum wage. We do not even know what that is like any more, we are so accustomed to our big salaries.

• (1935)

An hon. member: And pensions.

Mr. Thompson: And pensions. We have to start thinking a bit more about the little guys who are trying to get on their feet. When times are tough and we get things rolling right, let us remember that we are trying to provide services and goods that are much needed throughout the world.

In case anyone has forgotten, the most important industry in the world is agriculture. We better not ever forget that. We have to keep our food supplies going where they are needed, keep people fed when we have the opportunity to do so, keep the jobs rolling and keep giving opportunities to young people who are saying that all they want is a chance to prove themselves. They are hard workers. They do not want welfare. They do not want