

then certainly I am prepared to look at a compromise. However, the Bill as it stands at the moment is in favour of the employers. The Government bought the employer version, line and sinker and we would like to have someone speak for the workers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate with the Hon. Member for North Vancouver—Burnaby (Mr. Cook).

Mr. Chuck Cook (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, to emphasize the seriousness of this debate and what is taking place in the Port of Vancouver at the moment, I have been in touch with people in that city in the last 10 minutes and I can report to this House that there are now 24 vessels sitting there, 18 of which are grain cargo ships. The other 6 are there for other cargo. Some 18 of those grain ships will have demurrage charges which will have to be paid by the Canadian Wheat Board, which in turn is paid for by the farmers of Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and part of Manitoba. This dispute involves every farmer on the Prairies. It involves one in 10 people who depend upon the Port of Vancouver for their livelihood. Keep that in mind. If this legislation is not passed today the other six vessels will undoubtedly leave the port and go elsewhere. They are waiting only in the hope that this port can be opened by tomorrow morning, which hopefully it can.

It is a fascinating dispute in one sense of the word. It has a long history. We have had the container clause in contracts on the coast since 1970. Finally, in 1982, in the collective agreement signed that year, they made some forward movement in connection with that clause. One representative of the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association and one representative of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union were to do a study on the container clause and determine its effect and whether it was really that damaging to the Port of Vancouver. It is interesting to note that Mr. Don Garcia, at that time the Canadian area president of the union, worked on behalf of the union, and D.B. McLennan worked on behalf of the employers. They brought in their report which basically said that perhaps the container clause could be dropped for at least a year with guarantees from the employers that there would be no loss of work during that year to union members. It looked like it was a possibility. It is interesting to note that Mr. Garcia agreed to that. However, the 3,700 longshoremen in Local 500 turned it down totally. They would not agree. Mr. Garcia was defeated as union president in the 1984 union election. I suspect that was as a result of his agreeing to have the container clause removed for a year to learn what the result would be. Dave Lomas became the president of the longshoremen in 1984.

● (1150)

In 1984 the Vancouver Ports Corporation, representatives of the employers association and Mr. Dave Lomas went to the Far East searching out new cargo for Vancouver. They wanted to learn why shippers were not using the port and to tell them why they should use it. It was reported that many shippers in

the Far East said it was the container clause which caused them to avoid the Port of Vancouver. In fairness, there were other reasons, but the container clause was one reason.

Having learned this, Mr. Lomas began to express the view that something be done about the container clause. It is interesting to note that in April of 1986 Mr. Lomas lost his job as union leader. That possibly had a good deal to do with the fact that he had realized that the container clause was affecting the Port of Vancouver. Mr. Garcia won the election and became the president again.

There is absolutely no way Don Garcia could agree to anything with regard to the container clause. I think he believes that he lost his job over it on one occasion by attempting to be reasonable. Certainly Mr. Lomas lost his job because the 3,700 longshoremen in Local 500 want that bird in the hand and are not prepared to consider anything else. Even if it were guaranteed that the union would lose no work if the container clause were removed, could the union president agree to such a thing? Even if he did, the membership of the union would not ratify it. The 3,700 members of the union are absolutely immovable. The union executive would not dare to entertain such an idea. In addition, we now have an irresistible force because the employers now believe the clause must come out of the contract because of what it is costing them, the Port of Vancouver, the people of western Canada and our national image with regard to Vancouver becoming a major trading centre.

I am not prepared to say that the container clause is the only problem with the Port of Vancouver. It certainly is not. I found myself nodding my head in agreement with many of the comments made by members of the Opposition. However, we have an immovable object, the union, and an irresistible force, the management, which has locked the workers out because they want the contract settled. That situation presents a dilemma. The only answer is to force a solution, and that is the reason for the Maintenance of Ports Operations Act, 1986. The port must be put back into operation.

Is this Bill fair? I think most Hon. Members would agree that it is. It forces the employers to open their doors in order that work may resume. It specifies the Larson Report as the basis of the contract until 1988, but only because the parties are at loggerheads and cannot agree on anything. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) has not denied the parties the right to bargain and reach an agreement on anything. If they reach an agreement, Clause 12 of the Bill applies. That clause states, in simple terms, that if the two parties can agree on any contractual language, that language will apply. The Act also calls for an industrial inquiry commission into the Port of Vancouver and the container clause. It specifies that the conclusion of that commission will become part of the contract until 1988 as well. How else can you solve a problem when people are not talking to each other?

In his opening remarks on this Bill the Minister of Labour said that in this situation there is more punishment for others than for those involved. That is true when the port is closed