

THE SENATE

Thursday, July 6, 1972

The Senate met at 11 a.m., Hon. Maurice Bourget, P.C., Speaker *pro tem*, in the Chair.
Prayers.

DOCUMENTS TABLED

Hon. Paul Martin tabled:

Copy of a report entitled "The Canadian Northwest Transportation Study", dated November 1970, prepared for the Ministry of Transport by Hedlin Menzies and Associates Limited.

Report of Canadian Commercial Corporation, including its accounts and financial statements certified by the Auditor General, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1972, pursuant to section 13(1) of the Canadian Commercial Corporation Act, chapter C-6, and sections 75(3) and 77(3) of the Financial Administration Act, chapter F-10, R.S.C., 1970.

Statement of expenditures and financial commitments made under the Veterans' Land Act for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1972, pursuant to section 49 of the said Act, chapter V-4, R.S.C., 1970.

CANADA LABOUR CODE

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

Hon. Paul Martin moved the third reading of Bill C-183, to amend the Canada Labour Code.

Hon. John M. Macdonald: Honourable senators, any legislation dealing with the relationship between labour and management is, of course, of particular interest at this time when there appears to be so much unrest in this field. Every day we hear of strikes of one kind or another and very often now they are by people such as school teachers, hospital workers, policemen and the like, who normally resolve their difficulties without a work stoppage. Certainly when strikes occur which affect the public at large by causing inconvenience, hardship and irritation, then the whole system of collective bargaining is called into question. There is speculation that the system has broken down and is no longer adequate for its purpose. And this attitude, while understandable, is not, I think, a fair assessment of all the factors involved. It is not enough to deplore the actions of longshoremen, freight handlers or hydro workers and the like when they go on strike, and to condemn the whole system of collective bargaining as a means of settling disputes. No system can be perfect and no doubt sometimes strikes occur when they should not. However, I think it is most important, especially at the present time, that we keep a sense of proportion. We should not lose sight of the fact that thousands of collective agreements are entered into as a routine matter without any publicity and, indeed, no one but the parties involved hear about them. It is, I think, a fact which must be accepted that such ordinary agreements and pleasant relationships between labour and management have no news value, while disputes and disagree-

ments do have news value and are given wide publicity. It seems to me that the pattern, as it were, has changed. I have not seen any statistics to prove it but my impression is that there are very few strikes now in industrial plants or in mining and steelwork and that type of industry.

• (1110)

The likelihood of strikes occurring seems to be in the industries which provide a service, and it is these strikes which annoy and exasperate the public as a whole. The point I am trying to make is that when the public appear to lose patience with labour unions and demand some kind of governmental control over them, we should not, as I mentioned, lose our sense of proportion. It should then be remembered that while the system of collective bargaining as it has developed over the years is not a perfect system in so far as maintaining industrial peace is concerned, it is the best system yet devised under our democratic way of life which has a reasonable chance of bringing about equitable settlements of disputes between management and labour.

Honourable senators, the controversial part of Bill C-183 is comprised of those sections dealing with technological change. The problem, of course, is to encourage technological change so that Canadian industries can compete in both the domestic and foreign markets and at the same time minimize any adverse effect of such change on the workers in those industries. Certainly such changes are bound to take place; indeed, they must. So the problem resolves itself into what protection can be given to the workers directly affected. Sections 149 and 153 of the bill attempt to do this in a small way. Obviously workers cannot be given complete job security, and everyone realizes that. The bill does not claim to do more than to be helpful to the comparatively small number of workers in industries under federal jurisdiction who do not now have the protection the bill will provide, but it should be an example, an incentive, an encouragement for provincial jurisdictions to pass similar legislation. While I feel that this bill is good legislation I hope too much will not be expected of it.

I do not regard its proposals for technological change as being a radical departure from the present practice, or a spectacular breakthrough in management-labour relations. Rather I think it is but a logical, orderly and reasonable development of a process which has been going on for a long time. It is that process which slowly over the years has been giving some protection to workers against the ruthless play of economic forces. This development or evaluation began many years ago when labour unions ceased to be classed as unlawful assemblies. I hope that this process will continue.

If I might digress for a moment, I wonder what would have been the result if at the beginning of the industrial revolution the labourers themselves had been considered to be the first and most important factor in the production of goods. I suppose they were not because in these days and for a long time afterwards the supply of capital was