

Perhaps I may also mention the patience and hard work of Mr. Bernard Paquet, the union rep, and members of the Trois-Rivières longshoremen's unions executive, Wilfrid Martel, Stanley St-Louis, Jean-Guy Lafrenière, Léo Dumont, and all the others, including Robert Lemay, and so forth. I won't name them all because I am sure I will forget a few, but I just want to say how patient they have been throughout this whole process. They are dedicated to their cause, and they are dedicated to helping their fellow longshoremen. I think that has to be said.

Madam Speaker, this bill will, I hope, be passed today, and in concluding, I would like hon. members to realize that if the bill is adopted today, we will soon be able to say to our people in Trois-Rivières: mission accomplished.

[English]

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River): Madam Speaker, I too would like to enter the debate at third reading and make a few comments. I think it is imperative that we understand the importance of this legislation, Bill C-44, and the changes to section 34 of the Canada Labour Code.

Before I commence with talking in particular about this piece of legislation, I must say that it is very frustrating to hear and to try to put together some sort of focus in one's mind as to why it has taken almost seven years for this government to bring this piece of legislation forward. It has complete knowledge of the fact that the employees in this case have not been able to get an increase in wage and have been dealing basically in a vacuum without a collective agreement.

Having had the experience in the labour movement and being involved in collective bargaining processes myself, I know very well just how difficult that whole scenario would be to an individual who would have to go to work every day not having the collective agreement in place that would give them the incentive to want to be the best employee possible.

I would say to the government opposite that it basically is high time that we put this piece of legislation and this change to the Canada Labour Code in place. I question the wisdom as to why it was even brought in at this late stage this week because of the fact that the Senate is not

here. One of the problems that we are going to have now is that we will probably have to wait until next week at the earliest to get this legislation right through the final process in order that the collective bargaining rights of the workers can be maintained through the process of collective bargaining by forcing the employers to go to the bargaining table.

One of the things people who are listening to us today have to understand is that what this amendment basically does is allow the CLRB to simply enact the changes necessary to force the employers to put someone into place and if they do not do it within a reasonable time then the CLRB will do it for them.

One of the things we talked about in committee this morning was that it is a possibility even with these changes that we will still be delayed for many more months simply because we will have to wait for the CLRB to have interviews with the different employers and ask them why it is that they have difficulty coming to an agreement. Furthermore, it will have to wait for interventions of all the employers, if necessary, before it can make a ruling on who it will choose if that becomes necessary.

I would suggest to the government opposite in its letter to the CLRB that when the necessity and issue at hand is explained to them that it also make it very clear that this has to be dealt with very expeditiously and if there are other issues that are before them that they be put aside in order that this can be dealt with first hand.

• (1220)

The reason for that is because the employees, as we know, whom we are dealing with now are on strike at this moment. Christmas is coming. It is quickly drawing near. I think it is high time that they get back to the bargaining table and deal with the issue in its entirety.

I also question the wisdom of whether we are resolving the issue. I ask if it is going to improve the collective bargaining process in that particular geographic zone. We have been going through a process in the last six or seven years of these employers not having the ability to get their act together and agree on a particular representative to go forward and get involved in the collective bargaining process as is their right to do. It is also their moral obligation as it relates to their employees.