

and did go with others to the reception where we met the Soviet leaders.

On the question of what I did in addition to what I have now said—and I was there for only a very short time—I had an opportunity to meet with officials of Exportkhleb, which is the importing grain organization in the Soviet Union, and discussed the sales that we have agreed to and our delivery of those sales. I must say that the officials of that organization were very optimistic that Canada would meet its current contract in every way. They said that, while they were interested in what had happened regarding the dispute on the west coast, based on Canada's record they felt that this was a very temporary situation and that we would meet our commitments in full for the current year; and I agreed with them on that.

We did discuss or raise the possibility of additional sales to that market during the current year. From the views that were exchanged, I personally feel that there is a real possibility of additional sales during the current year. Of course, there is the matter of guaranteed credit having been provided to the Soviet Union, but, as I said earlier, there was absolutely no element of subsidy. It is perfectly clear that the repayment terms will be fully met. The information I received or the opinions I heard would indicate that there may not be the same kind of need for credit in the foreseeable future that there has recently been, which, to me, just underlines how important it was to provide that 180-day credit, how wise it was from a business standpoint, and how fortunate we were, from the standpoint of the producers of western Canada and the economy of Canada, to be able to make such a huge and satisfactory sale.

● (1430)

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

LABOUR RELATIONS

BRITISH COLUMBIA—VANCOUVER HARBOUR—RESUMPTION OF OPERATIONS

Hon. Ann Elizabeth Bell: Honourable senators, I should like to address a question to the Leader of Her Majesty's Government in the Senate. Of great concern to us on the west coast is the recent order of Parliament for longshoremen to resume work at the west coast ports. Is there anything that we can do to ensure compliance with that law if longshoremen do not adhere to this order? The problem that we are faced with is that there are perhaps four months of backlog to unload or to load, and ships are in demurrage situations, and so on. The longshoremen are not supplying sufficient crews to carry out this work. Due to insufficient workers, companies trying to load lumber, grain or whatever, are now looking at 18 days instead of 8 days to complete that work, and thousands of dollars a day in demurrage. In the meantime on Vancouver Island there are breadlines in various Pacific coast ports consisting of people who are willing to do that work, but apparently the longshoremen's union will not provide extra labour, or train them. Of course, we are losing contracts and people who are shipping are saying, "Sue me. I will not carry

on with it; I will go through Seattle and order from somebody else." It is a terrible situation for the British Columbia ports.

How can we ensure compliance with this legislation that was recently passed by Parliament?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I noted the remarks of Senator Bell, but I do not believe that I should comment on them at the moment. As a matter of fact, I think the vote of the union membership to ratify the tentative agreement that has been worked out between the employers and the unions is being held either today or tomorrow. I do not think that any discussion or any comment from me, or from the Minister of Labour, would be helpful in this situation.

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary. Would the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board have any comment to make on this subject, as he could probably inform us regarding the flow of grain.

Hon. Hazen Argue (Minister of State for Canadian Wheat Board): Honourable senators, as I recall the bill, I do not think there is anything particular in it concerning a settlement coming about because of negotiations, or a tentative settlement, at any rate, being reached before the deadline. My leader mentioned that there is to be a meeting tonight of the longshoremen to discuss the proposed settlement. I have been endeavouring on a daily basis to keep track of what is happening on the west coast regarding the grain situation. What is happening out there gives us much reason for optimism.

The grain handlers have a tentative settlement. They are prepared to work overtime and, in fact, they are doing so.

It is true that when they request a certain number of gangs, as I understand the situation with longshoremen, they are not always able to get the number they request. A 40,000-tonne loading into a ship per day is considered about average. There have been days since this tentative settlement when the loading of a ship amounted to 60,000 tonnes and 50,000 tonnes. The work is going forward.

Yesterday at the terminals there were some 543 car unloads. A 3,500 car unload week is indicative of a pretty good week. Some weeks they can exceed that, but, nonetheless, 3,500 car unloads at Vancouver is indicative of a good week's work. Therefore, in a five-day week—and sometimes a week may be longer than five days—an unload of some 700 cars per day is close to maximum performance. I think that is very good progress.

The information I have today indicates that one vessel is loading at Prince Rupert and two vessels are waiting. Six vessels are loading at Vancouver and 26 vessels are waiting. Six vessels are due into Vancouver this week, and only one vessel is due into Vancouver next week.

Since the tentative settlement, up until now, the loading of ships has been equal to the arrival of ships. My information is that, if there can be some reasonable increase in the loading of ships and since, as time goes on, probably fewer vessels will arrive, there will be a catch-up.