

Pacific Coast Longshoremen Dispute

courts at the present time the situation cannot be allowed to continue for much longer. I suggest if there is no settlement of this matter by no later than the beginning of next week, the government should consider appointing an administrator of the port of Vancouver to take control of its whole operation. He should control the companies as well as the union to alleviate the present emergency. At the same time, mediation ought to be carried on.

This type of suggestion was made last spring at the time of the St. Lawrence seaway difficulties. I am the last person to suggest action like this were the situation not as serious as it is at the present time.

If, by the beginning of next week, no resumption of work or no settlement has taken place this government ought to consider appointing an administrator who would take charge of the port of Vancouver, of the operations of the companies and of the union in all aspects, while mediation is carried on.

Mr. R. R. Southam (Moose Mountain): Coming from a great grain growing province, Saskatchewan, I feel impelled to join with other hon. members in this debate on the motion proposed by the hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke to adjourn this house to discuss a matter of urgent public importance.

As other members have said, many sectors of our economy have been adversely affected. In Saskatchewan we produce about half the exportable wheat of Canada. A great bulk of our grain is in our elevators, on the farms, and as has been mentioned, in grain cars which are backed up from the west coast to Saskatchewan.

I join with other hon. members in urging the government to consider this as a matter of great urgency, not only, as the hon. member for Acadia said, for the grain farmers of Canada, but for all sectors of our economy; the forest products industry of British Columbia, the fruit growers, and for all those industries which seek to move commodities to market positions. The workers are involved, as are the transport companies. There is difficulty transporting goods, performing services, and people will be laid off with a resulting loss of wages.

Should this dispute continue, it is my belief that the Minister of Labour will have no alternative but to take immediate action. It is interesting to note the alacrity with which the government was ready to accept the motion of urgency by the hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke, because only yesterday or the day

[Mr. Prittie.]

before, the Minister seemed not to heed the pleas of the opposition.

● (1:30 p.m.)

I think the readiness of the Prime Minister to allow this motion to come before the house was in itself an indication of the importance of finding a solution to this situation which has developed on the west coast. I agree with those who have suggested that a mediator be appointed. If we follow this course, I suggest a time limit should be set, possibly a week. If at the end of this period no positive results have been achieved, this house should set about amending the labour relations act so as to provide a solution not only in respect of this occurrence but in respect of similar occurrences which are likely to arise in the future.

As has been pointed out, this country has been plagued with labour troubles for the last several years. It is high time the government took positive action to show the people of Canada that they were being led by a government of decision, not by a government of indecision and indiscretion, examples of which have been so frequent recently. I certainly support the contention of previous speakers that the government take immediate action to help straighten out the situation which has developed on the west coast.

Mr. Colin Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): As one whose constituency is directly affected by the situation, I feel I should say a few words on this motion. I should like, first of all, to support the suggestion made by my hon. friend from Burnaby-Coquitlam that the method by which the government could at least temporarily resolve this situation might be by the appointment of an administrator until the matter could be settled between management and labour.

I think we must realize, however, that we are concerned today with a situation of a type which will occur with greater and greater frequency in cases where industries vital to the economic health of the country are involved. In recent months we have had the experience of the railway strike, the St. Lawrence situation and, only last week the Air Canada strike. It occurs to me that while attending to the immediate problem here, perhaps by the method suggested by my hon. friend, the government should also be considering a much broader policy approach to labour disputes in industries which are essential to the welfare of the Canadian community.

We have to face the fact that it is intolerable that their operations should be suspended