

Labour Dispute at Montreal

next two or three hours or for the balance of the day. The government must realize that it has a responsibility. Hon. gentlemen opposite must take action. They cannot allow this situation to drift as it is drifting at the present time, though it is true it has been the habit of this government in the past to allow strikes to drag on without making any attempt to bring about a settlement. They have sat week after week and month after month waiting for some miracle to take place because they had no solution to the problem with which they were faced.

The present situation at Montreal is another of the tie-ups which have occurred simply because hon. gentlemen opposite have failed to govern this country, have failed to accept their responsibilities. In view of the fact that the Picard report was made directly to the minister I suggest he should call both parties to Ottawa at once, sit down with them and try to bring about agreement on the terms of this report so it may be implemented in collective bargaining between the two parties and the port may resume operations as soon as possible.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): I welcome this opportunity to discuss the important question now before the house. We believe the work stoppage will do incalculable harm to the whole of the Canadian economy. The immediate pressure arises in connection with the perishable merchandise to which the mover of the motion has already referred, but we are so close to the end of the shipping season in Montreal that the cost of this stoppage to the Canadian economy, if it continues, is something which cannot be calculated.

I say on behalf of our party that this stoppage cannot be permitted to continue. Yesterday, when he was asked about this situation, the minister said as reported on page 4598 of *Hansard*:

There is no authority under which the Minister of Labour can intervene in cases of this kind. The parties must learn they should try to work out their own differences.

I personally have always said that free collective bargaining means negotiation between labour and management, and that governments cannot and should not intervene in every dispute. But consider the circumstances in this case. Here is a stoppage which is taking place because the government of Canada did intervene at an earlier stage. Last year when there were problems and stoppages the government of Canada put

forward legislation with which many of us disagreed violently. It put forward legislation appointing an arbitrator and making it a condition of the law that the award of the arbitrator should be binding on both parties. It is as a result of that legislation and of an award by Mr. Picard, the wording of which is apparently unacceptable to either side, that we are faced with this stoppage.

It is not a sudden or an unexpected stoppage. For weeks the signs have been apparent. For weeks it has been obvious from press reports, messages and telegrams from the union to representatives of the various parties in this house, that all was not going well. I am sure the shipping federation has been in communication with the minister for some time. For weeks it has been obvious that the arbitration award was giving rise to difficulty, that the understanding of both parties as to its meaning was different. It was obvious that there would be trouble.

The union claims the companies are implementing only those portions of the award which suit them. I shall not go into details, but as I understand it one of the major sections of the arbitration decision provided that there should be a reduction in the number of people working in each gang. The arbitrator obviously based this part of the award on the fact that with the use of more modern equipment the work could be done by gangs containing fewer men than in the past. I believe the number of men was cut from 21 to 16. This is a sharp decrease but, as I understand it, the union and the men are not disputing this decision. They recognize that the advance of technology cannot and should not be stopped.

However, as I understand their case they take the position that in return for agreeing to this reduction in the size of the work force the award contained provision for certain guarantees in connection with the minimum hours for which the men would be paid each week, and so on. As I understand the position the companies have refused to implement this part of the arbitration award. Under these conditions, believing that the companies are unfairly using the law passed by parliament and using unfairly an award made by an arbitrator, and faced by the refusal of the companies to discuss these matters in any kind of amicable and open minded way, the union and the men have resorted to work stoppages.

To me it seems obvious that since the dispute has arisen as a result of differences of opinion as to the report of an arbitrator