

The Address—Mr. Benjamin

the House concerns the amendment moved by my leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner), and that the question is to be put on this motion tomorrow afternoon. I might also remind the Chair that yesterday, the Liberal Party had only two speakers, the New Democrats, three and the Government, five. Today, I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to give some Liberal Members the floor so that we too can comment on the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have duly noted the representations made by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier). The Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

[English]

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to call to your attention that the intent of the reform with respect to the question and answer period was that, in this case, Members on the government side would only be recognized when there were no Members from Parties other than the speaker rising to be recognized. What happened just a few moments ago, Sir, is that you recognized a Member of the Party of the person who had been speaking when there were two or three Members from Parties not of the Party of the speaker rising to seek the floor. I just wanted to bring that to your attention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Without wanting to get into a debate on this matter, and I have discussed that point with the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie), it is my view that during the question and comment period the priority should be given to Members of a Party other than that of the speaker, but the priority is not to the point of exclusivity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can understand very well the position of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill. That is why in this particular case, after the Hon. Minister had finished his speech, I did choose a Member of the Official Opposition first, a Member of the New Democratic Party second and a Member of the government side third. However, I would be willing to discuss this matter further with the Hon. Member and, of course, with the Speaker.

On debate, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating Mr. Speaker on his election to the office of Magistrate of this House. I also want to add my congratulations to the Deputy Speaker and to the two assistant Speakers who occupy the Chair from time to time. I believe that all four of you will treat us well and fairly and will serve this House in the interests of the Members of this House.

I want to begin by first commenting on a situation that is presently confronting the people of this country, particularly the people of western Canada. It concerns the lock-out of the longshoremen in Vancouver Harbour. I want to say that I have no intention of getting into the details of the dispute, other

than to say that it essentially is about the handling of containers. When a container contains products destined to two or more shippers somebody has to unpack them and repack them, according to the shippers and the destinations. That is what the dispute is about, and it is something that needs to be resolved between the employers and the union. I will not discuss that any further.

I want to say that a major part of the operations of the Vancouver port can be, should be and must remain in operation. These operations have nothing to do with containers and containerization. People in the three Prairie provinces are extremely concerned about the complete shutdown overnight of grain movement to Vancouver, a situation which did not even happen on grain movement to Thunder Bay just a few weeks ago—at least some grain moved. But in this instance there is a complete shutdown. As a result, thousands of employees on the railroads and in other aspects of the industry have been laid off.

What has to be brought to the attention of this House is that I, in my examination of grain terminals in Vancouver or anywhere else, have yet to see a container and the handling of bulk commodities like grain having anything to do with the dispute. The essential part of the dispute is between the longshoremen and the employers about container handling. Similarly with lumber, I have seen lumber being loaded and unloaded, and all other kinds of lumber products, and I have yet to see that they have anything to do with a container. This operation has nothing to do with the essential part of the dispute going on at the moment.

● (1230)

As a Member of this place from Saskatchewan, the whole western half of which moves grain to Vancouver and Prince Rupert, I call upon the grain companies and the union to immediately open the grain terminals and move the grain. As far as I am concerned there is no excuse whatsoever for the grain elevators in Vancouver to be closed down. I understand from news reports today that the union has offered to keep moving the grain but not the containers. Mr. Garcia, the union president, said they are prepared to work the grain, but if the employer closes the doors they cannot get at the work. So there is no excuse whatsoever for the grain elevators in Vancouver to be shut down. It has nothing to do with the current dispute.

I suggest the same thing applies to most if not all of the movement of lumber out of Vancouver Harbour. Little if any of that product is moved by container. There is no reason whatsoever why everyone else involved in the production of grain and lumber should be victimized by a dispute which has nothing to do with them. Therefore I have to say that the elevator companies, and this includes my friends in the co-operative elevator system, the Prairie Pool and the UGG, that they must open their terminals immediately and move the grain.

As I understand it, of the 3,700 longshoremen in the union, not more than a handful, probably about 20, are required to