

Canada Grain Bill

with regard to this particular clause. Most elevator companies have indicated their grave concern to the committee. There was nothing similar to this in the old grain act.

What has been the situation in the past? The last major work stoppage was at the Lakehead two years ago. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) was not very sympathetic to the producers and the elevator companies at that time. I will paraphrase a newspaper clipping concerning that situation. The minister said that if the grain trade had made a reasonable offer in the first place there would not have been a strike or the strike would have been shortlived. This is what he told the western farmers.

Two years ago the terminal grain handlers at the Lakehead were offered \$1 an hour increase after much bargaining. Members of the office of the Minister of Labour intervened. A settlement was reached with \$1.05 increase. The Minister of Agriculture cannot say that a reasonable offer was not made. Originally \$1 was offered and the final settlement was for \$1.05.

Mr. Olson: They did not.

Mr. Horner: The Minister may speak when I have concluded my remarks. A substantial increase was made two years ago. The contract is up for renewal this fall. Perhaps the end of this year will be the deadline. They are now asking for another 20 per cent increase in wages. Surely, the hand of the union does not have to be strengthened in today's economic set-up. I do not have anything against unions. They have played an important part in bringing about greater equity to those employed in the major industries in Canada and throughout the world. However, it is not the time for Canada to strengthen their hand at the bargaining table. Their hand does not need strengthening with regard to the handling of grain.

The hand of the union does not need strengthening in Vancouver or the Lakehead. Approximately 400 workers tied up the entire prairie economy. This was as the result of what happened in Vancouver a year ago. The entire prairie economy was affected when over 200 workers went on strike for a period of 26 weeks, half a year. Approximately 200,000 farmers were affected by slightly over 200 workers. Farmers repeatedly threatened to go to the coast to load the boats themselves, although they did not actually do this. After being on strike for 26 weeks in Vancouver, the workers finally settled for a 70 cent an hour wage increase with fringe benefits. The total cost to the companies was 87 cents an hour. This contract does not expire until the end of 1971.

Greater strength is being given to the unions at the bargaining table at a time when they are not acting like good Canadians. In his guidelines, Dr. Young proposed a 6 per cent wage increase and a 6 per cent price increase. We were told that the companies made a sincere effort to comply with this. However, they made no real efforts to comply with the suggestions and stated quite categorically that they would not comply. At times they deliberately went out of their way to prove that they were stronger

and more forceful than the government. They convinced the government that wage increases in excess of 6 per cent were necessary.

A short time ago the grain trade settled for a huge increase. The grain trade can have serious effects on the whole matter of grain marketing. Hon. members know that the problems of grain and grain handling can create a massive financial problem for the producers of that commodity. A strike is only called when that industry is in a position to create economic chaos. For example, they do not strike when navigation on the St. Lawrence River is closed. It is to their advantage to strike when they can create the most pressure at the bargaining table.

The government has stated that labour must somehow control its wishes. A Prices and Incomes Commission was established to study price and wage increases. Huge sums of the taxpayers money were spent for this commission to travel across the country. On the other hand, government wage settlements indicate no attention was paid to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), who stated the purposes of the commission. As I have said, the government puts forward a bill containing a clause which positively assists the unions at the bargaining table. This is what the United Grain Growers think; this is what the Manitoba pool thinks; this is what the North-West Line Elevator Company thinks; this is what the Federal Grain Elevator Company thinks—I could name a whole host. These are the people who will be negotiating on behalf of the producers for fair wage settlements. Hon. members can ask themselves: was there any provision of this kind in the old act? Remember, the old act was successful for 40 years; for 40 years it was conducive to peaceful wage negotiations and proved relatively satisfactory. I contend that this clause is an afterthought, included to meet the wishes of the board and in particular of the solicitor for the Wheat Board, Mr. Monk, I am told, who was tired of negotiating these arrangements and preferred a fixed pattern, going automatically into operation at the end of seven days. There was nothing in the old act along these lines and I urge the government to take the clause out of the bill before us, in line with my amendment. Such a provision has not been necessary for 40 years, it is not required now, and the amendment urges that it be removed.

• (4:00 p.m.)

I wish the minister would hide his prejudices. I know he favoured the unions at the negotiating table at the Lakehead two years ago when he suggested that the grain growers had not made a fair offer in the initial instance. Hon. members should bear in mind that we may be setting up a system here which will last another 40 years. A time may come within the next 10 years when some provision such as this will have to be written into the bill to give the unions greater bargaining power, but this is not the occasion on which to do so; this is not the time to say to the unions: You do not have sufficient economic strength in our society so we must ensure that a body of men numbering some 200 employed in the Vancouver terminal can tie up the produce of about 200,000 farmers trying to get their grain to export mar-