

*Government Orders*

• (1920)

[English]

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Wild Rose.

For 11 days in 1994 shipping through the B.C. ports was paralyzed. The estimates of the losses to the Canadian grain industry ran in the hundreds of millions of dollars. We are talking about grain in that instance. There were also manufacturers who lost out in the strike in 1994.

What did that strike cost them? It is difficult to measure that. Even more difficult to measure is the damage to our reputation as a reliable shipper. These were not the only losers in that strike. I believe everybody in a strike or a lockout situation is ultimately a loser. The workers on strike will probably never be able to make up for the wages they lost during that time.

It is absolutely ludicrous that such losses should be allowed to occur over and over again. In doing a little research, I came upon some bills that were very similar in nature. Some of them would think we could dust off and they would be suitable for today.

They are dated 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 right up to 1994 when we had to consider just such legislation in order to get the port of Vancouver working again. Déjà vu, here we are again. Sixty per cent of Canada's grain exports have been held in limbo. When one ties up that system, it has a domino effect. It backs up right to the farmers' gates. Nobody in a strike situation is in a winning position.

My friend from Rivière-du-Loup pointed out that perhaps because this has happened so often, the collective bargaining process is failing. I could not agree with him more.

Our minister has assured the House she would like to put something in place to ensure this does not happen again. I hear my friend from Rivière-du-Loup saying the same thing. He would like to make sure we do not have to go through this painful exercise, that perhaps when labour and management realize it is only a matter of time before the government steps in they maybe are not bargaining as closely and as honestly as they should.

I would be delighted if the Minister of Labour would look closely at what the Reform Party has put forward. My colleague from Lethbridge has put forward Bill C-262, a final arbitration bill, which we hope would never have to be used. Just because it is there does not mean that it is something we are going to beat up either management or union with and make them settle.

It is intended so both management and union know that if they cannot come to an agreement, they had better bargain hard and fast or this could be implemented.

We also have to look at what kind of a situation we would be in if the strike and lockout situation at the port of Vancouver were settled tomorrow. That contract is only good until December 31, 1995.

Then negotiations will start all over again. Perhaps next year at this time we would be back in the House considering back to work legislation again. Today the Minister of Labour announced the establishment of a commission to study labour relations.

• (1925)

I invite the Minister of Labour to read through our bill, to study our bill and to see the merit in it. If the minister is philosophically opposed to supporting a motion simply because it came from the Reform Party, then fine. Defeat that motion, but bring in another one that is very similar and will accomplish the same thing.

In speaking to the port authority today in Vancouver, it was estimated that in the container business alone, some 7,000 containers at about an average income of \$1000 per container for handling has been lost in the little time this strike has been going on. This adds up to \$7 million in lost revenue, not to say anything about the damage done to our reputation as a reliable supplier and what it has done to labour management relations.

A chain reaction takes place whenever we have a situation of this type. We are in a situation in which some 405 people have managed to bring the entire west coast shipping to a halt. It completely grinds to a stop from the port right back to the gate of the farmers and the manufacturers.

Is it not odd that these people at the port have never been designated as an essential service until they go on strike or are locked out? Suddenly they are essential. The fact we have to bring in legislation to put them back to work makes them essential in my books.

Bill C-262 would not only be a very useful tool to labour and management, it would not only apply to the port of Vancouver, but also to the port of Montreal where we have a similar situation taking place.

The port of Montreal is a very important east coast facility and we should be considering some intervention in that area. We have been reading in the paper where the port of authority there expects the government to take action, thereby strengthening our case that Bill C-262 would be required reading for the Minister of Labour.

We are not trying to point the finger at anyone in particular. It takes two organizations to come up with a conflict and I am sure there are two sides to this conflict.

Our final offer arbitration bill would be a very useful tool, one probably welcomed by both business and labour and I encourage the House to support that bill.