

encourage this government to work through an all-party committee in reaching a long-term solution to these recurring problems.

The last strike lasted five days, this strike eleven days. Let us ensure there are no future strikes which will curtail grain movement in the country.

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's outlining his solutions to labour disputes at the west coast. I am personally quite angry that this particular dispute has come about and the disruption that has occurred. Before we are finished with this nearly three weeks will have been lost in the shipment of grains, at a time when the shipping program was at its peak and in particular at its peak for those grades which we have had some trouble disposing of since they were in surplus in Canada: No. 3 wheat and the feed grains.

In listening to the hon. member's solutions I wonder if he would square for me what I understood his party's position is with regard to property rights and the rights of the owners to manage that property. How would he square that right with his proposal to force these people to stay open, keeping in mind that this disruption for grain at least and the previous one or two disruptions came about as a result of a lockout where the owners of the longshoring companies or the grain handling companies simply refused to open their doors to let the workers continue?

**Mr. Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly would not want to point a finger, in this case or in past disputes, at either management or labour. That is not my intent at all. I recognize that some have been lockouts and some have been strikes.

In terms of reconciling our position on property rights and ending a strike, we fully recognize that to make an open market system work well certain regulations must be in place. This is exactly one example of that type of situation. We have a near monopoly situation. Farmers have no option other than this route to get their grain to the customer. This is one time when government regulation is needed so that the system will work well.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup):** Mr. Speaker, I have a comment for the hon. member who just spoke. I make these comments as a former personnel director in an educational institution which has weathered the stormy seventies and seen better times later in terms of work relations. I think that there is a principle that is sacrificed with the best offer proposal: in labour relations, we must always have a win-win situation.

Yet this proposal will inevitably lead to a choice being made, a situation where there will be a winner and a loser. When I look at past labour disputes, in 1972, 1975, 1982, 1986 and so on, it is

### *Government Orders*

clear to me that the worst thing we could do would be to make a decision where one side would win and the other one lose. This would create a situation where, in terms of labour relations, they would always be at one another's throats and, when the time to negotiate a new agreement comes, they would dig their heels and ask themselves what would be the best way to play their hand with the legislator in order to end up on the winning side instead of the losing side.

I think this is not a good way to put the responsibility in the hands of the bargaining parties. This is especially true in the present case where, beside the fact that the dispute has a major economic impact, it would seem that neither labour nor management exhibited totally inappropriate behaviour. The problem is much more due to the historical background.

To conclude, I would like to ask the hon. member if, based on the foregoing arguments, he would not favour instead the option to let the adjudicator set what the new work conditions will be for the workers involved.

[*English*]

**Mr. Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, one possible solution I laid out was that all of these disputes would be settled before the end of the contract. Therefore there would be no labour disruptions in this type of dispute where there really is no option available for people using the service.

I do not see that as really encouraging settlement through legislation. In fact I believe there is a higher probability of labour and management reaching an agreement before a negotiator or an arbitrator comes into play. This type of settlement where there is one option from labour and one from management put on the table is going to lead to more serious and more realistic offers. I believe a more fair settlement is reached with that type of mechanism.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes before we go into committee of the whole to express my surprise and disappointment as we consider this legislation, one of the first bills to be introduced by this government. It is similar in scope to legislation passed by the Conservatives between 1984 and 1992, mainly toward the end of their mandate, when there was a labour dispute at Canada Post and a dispute in the public service, where they acted with a total lack of imagination and a total lack of care.

After keeping its distance, the present government had decided, now that things have come to a head, to intervene in this dispute in the tried and true way, on the advice of their senior officials or perhaps as a result of public pressure. One wonders, considering that it was clear a dispute was imminent, especially in January when the parties started jockeying for position, the unions had made their statements and the employers had shown a great deal of intolerance, why all of a sudden no one in the