

Adjournment Debate

of the Unemployment Insurance Commission to subsidize a person who gives up his employment in order to retrain himself for a higher paying job. I would say to the hon. member that we would be most happy to discuss this particular case with her in light of the facts she has, and we shall endeavour to obtain for her full information on this matter.

LABOUR RELATIONS—ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS' STRIKE—FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTION TO ACHIEVE SETTLEMENT

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Turner), the hon. member for London East, is here to answer my question tonight. It is an asset for any party to have him because he is one of the more likeable members of this House. I say that without any reservations.

Tonight I wish to deal with a matter about which many members have spoken and on which they have asked questions. On February 15 I asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) the following question:

Mr. Speaker, I should like to address this question to the Prime Minister. In light of the national crisis now affecting housing units because of cost, shortage and the economy of the country, what do the government and the Prime Minister intend to do to assist in the negotiations for a settlement of the lengthy strike of elevator construction workers which is affecting the economy of Canada in all its facets? This strike has reached the level of a crisis in respect of shortages in housing and the general health and well-being of the Canadian people.

The Prime Minister suggested I direct the question to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro), which I did. This question appears at page 1309 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact the federal government has done nothing to intervene in respect of this strike—

This, of course, is the strike of the International Union of Elevator Constructors.

—which is costing \$250,000 a day in taxpayers' money, will the Minister of Labour now meet with the parties involved or with the various premiers of the provinces to bring to an end this strike which is not only affecting the economy but the health and welfare of the people of Canada?

The Minister of Labour replied as follows:

Mr. Speaker, it is not correct to say that we have done nothing. The fact is that we as the federal government have absolutely no jurisdiction to intervene in this particular strike.

I want to answer that. On February 26, as recorded at page 1639 of *Hansard*, I asked the same question. I do not intend to read it. I will put it this way: I said that, even assuming that it is a provincial matter, surely there is a responsibility on the federal government to bring together at least the ministers of labour of the ten provinces in order to bring an end to this strike. The Prime Minister did say he would consider the request. At least he had some appreciation of what was going on.

This is a national question. It is true it is a problem which comes under the jurisdiction of the provinces. However, we must consider what the strike is all about. It involves the International Union of Elevator Constructors. The strike has been affecting elevator construction in the ten provinces of Canada. It is not something involv-

[Mr. MacGuigan.]

ing merely the province of Ontario but, rather, Canada from coast to coast. Even in the province of Quebec, where the provincial government intervened, there has been a slowdown. From the beginning, the union insisted that any settlement must encompass all of Canada, not just Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, British Columbia or Alberta. This means that the settlement must be based on the Toronto wage scale.

• (2210)

The amount paid to the elevator constructors will make no difference whether it is in the Maritimes, in British Columbia or elsewhere to the cost of living in different areas. What is the strike really about? It would not be so bad if they were asking for better working conditions or for higher wages. But do you know what they are asking for? This strike is an American-motivated international strike. They are angry because the elevators are prefabricated in the factories for apartment blocks and commercial buildings; they cannot be prefabricated on the job. This is featherbedding of the worst kind. If this were a Canadian union it would not be so bad, but this is a sympathy strike for the United States unions.

Why is this strike national in scope? First of all, 750 projects in Canada are affected from coast to coast. Tonight more than 15,000 workers are out of work and drawing unemployment insurance. If that does not make it national in scope, what does? Millions of dollars of unemployment insurance are being squandered, dollars which taxpayers are putting up.

What about the health and welfare of the people of Canada? Who are we talking about? We are talking about the aged who live in buildings 20 storeys high and who cannot take the elevator down to get medicine from the drugstore. We are talking about the sick and the infirm, about the homeless. Dozens of people have had their contracts cancelled after having made their payment on a housing unit. Above all, there has been national violence against the people of Canada by American-motivated unions. Apparently the elevator union has been harassing and intimidating supervisors of buildings and other people who belong to Canadian unions.

Now I want to come to an important point. Lord Watson said, in a famous case, that that is how in time of war the federal government can take over control of the country—by controlling labour, management and industry. They can call this a crisis. When they relate it to the B.N.A. Act, as Lord Watson said, peace, order and good government take over. Surely it is time this country arrived at a new theory and perhaps it should be tested in the Supreme Court of Canada.

When there is an economic crisis which affects property and civil rights in the whole country, the federal government can move in to end the strike. This crisis is national in scope and such a case is covered by the constitution. Even if I have to apply a new theory tonight, I must point out that this government cannot sit idly by and watch people thrown out of work, see a drain on the unemployment insurance fund and people who are unable to get out of their apartments, the infirm, the aged and the sick, and 750 projects affected. We are losing a quarter of a million