

Pacific Coast Longshoremen Dispute

legislation to solve the difficulties of the extraordinary situation now existing.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, the members who have directed their remarks to the subject matter of this debate have said about all that can be said. I wish to make one particular appeal relating to the situation prevailing in my part of the country. I have received a number of letters and telegrams—I received the last two today—about this matter. The grain farmers of northern Alberta and British Columbia are critically affected by what is happening. Because of adverse weather conditions they had a poor crop last year. This year the crop was better, but because of adverse weather conditions much of the crop harvested was tough and damp. If the normal flow of grain from the areas I have mentioned to the west coast ports is not allowed to continue, millions of bushels of grain will be lost and the tough and damp grain will go bad. I do not know whether the minister is aware of the situation in my part of the country and elsewhere. Judging from the answers he has given to questions in the house, I am sure he is as concerned as anybody else about such matters.

Going through copies of *Hansard*, reading the answers to questions the minister gave yesterday, the day before that and the day before that, it seems to me that one of the problems in the minister's mind is the propriety of acting while court proceedings exist. The minister's position is a difficult one, but sometimes I think that in this house we have been too sensitive about that sort of thing. There is a rule of debate which prevents us from referring to matters in respect of which court proceedings are pending. But if court proceedings exist in connection with a situation such as this, involving a strike, nothing in the rules of the house or in the constitution prevents this government and this house from acting, and saying, "We shall legislate". Litigation may be all very well, but legislation always supersedes litigation. This is a Rubicon which has to be crossed, and we must know that it is wise and proper to do so.

Not in every instance can parliament and the government go rushing in to settle litigious proceedings, no matter how serious are the matters involved. Parliament can only do that when it is quite obvious that no other reasonable method exists to dispose of the matter, when the matter in question is of national urgency. After all, we represent the people, and their interest is supreme. The people as a

whole look to us to see that their interest is upheld.

I am sure the minister has been told by his advisers that it is always possible, if the suggestions from this side of the house are followed and the government decides to intervene through legislation, to let the rights of the parties come before the courts. Those rights, as I read the minister's answers, relate entirely to damages. Judging from the minister's answers to questions posed to him, the employers were taking proceedings which sounded as though they were framed to recover damages.

Any legislation enacted can be so framed that it is without prejudice to existing rights between the parties. The proceedings in court can be insulated. In other words, we can deal with this as an emergent situation and legislate in such a way that we do not interfere with the rights of the parties to damages. That can be done by framing the terms of the bill in a certain way.

I have been trying to find, by reading the press, what proceedings are being undertaken on the west coast. It may be that the proceedings go to the root of the problem, and deal with labour relations as well as damages. Certainly, it is not beyond the capacity of the government to frame legislation to solve a national problem in such a way that the legislation in no way impairs or affects the rights of the parties before the courts.

Mr. R. W. Prittie (Burnaby-Richmond): I wish to make a few brief comments on this serious subject. As a representative of the Vancouver area I am aware of the difficulties existing there, but those difficulties are not confined to that area alone. The grain cars are backing up, affecting our friends from the prairie provinces. Other industries throughout British Columbia, as we all know, are threatened at the present time. Perishable goods in Vancouver harbour are not being unloaded.

The hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke (Mr. Johnston) moved the adjournment of the house this morning. Some of my colleagues and I had been considering the same action. We thought it would not be amiss to leave the situation alone over the week end to see if any settlement were arrived at. We felt, had there been no settlement of any kind by Monday, that it would be timely for us to act.

The matter is complicated, as the minister has said. There are applications before the courts. Be that as it may, the minister must realize that despite any action before the