

West Coast Ports Operations Act

cent? What is going to happen to those profits? What kind of equity and fairness is that?

We oppose this Bill very strongly, Mr. Speaker. We also oppose the blackmail tactic implicit in the timing of this and the way it is being imposed. To delay several days, saying, "Okay fellows, you can finish your negotiations and we will not impose it" is ridiculous. It is intimidating. It is saying, "All right, employers, you don't have to worry. We are going to give you a drastic decrease in wage increases and you can keep the difference between that and the 14 per cent." It is saying to the unions, "You are supporting the employers on those basic contract clauses, the container clause and the shift policies." These are absolutely not negotiable from the point of view of the workers. They have been there since the docks were opened on a 24-hour basis. They are there to protect their jobs. If the clause is changed, the union estimates that close to 300 jobs will be lost.

There is no way we will support the imposition of a six and five wage increase. We believe that this Bill symbolizes the unwillingness of the Government to support free collective bargaining. It is obvious that the Government is moving in favour of intimidating, police state tactics.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Chairman I should like to speak briefly on this matter and then ask a question of the Minister. I represent a British Columbia riding of working people, in Vancouver-Kingsway. Many of these people are unionized. There are some longshoremen in my riding and there are also retired farmers from Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba.

I have tried in this House to find a national point of view. I know that Canada is a very difficult country to govern. This Bill and this problem indicate how difficult it is to govern. I have tried to take a national point of view. Any Member who says there are not competing interests in this Bill is kidding himself or herself. This problem is difficult to resolve, but the Bill itself is not difficult to deal with.

I do not want to spend my limited time attacking other Members, although I will have one comment to make later about the Hon. Member for North Vancouver-Burnaby. I will point out some inconsistencies in his view.

It seems to me there are two competing principles at work here, and one is the right to free collective bargaining. One of the reasons for our opposition to the Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act was that this clause we are now discussing interferes with and takes away collective bargaining. Many Canadians who are watching this debate on television tonight may ask why we are so much in favour of collective bargaining. Mr. Chairman, we are in favour of it because it is what has kept our country working and what has kept our country free.

People in Poland are prepared to give up their very lives for the right to collective bargaining. I think every Canadian can understand that. When Pope John Paul or Lech Walesa speak about Poland, they are speaking of free collective bargaining. This principle is at stake here.

Another principle that is at stake is the common good of getting an industry going, specifically the grain industry. It is probably the only industry in the country today that is working to capacity. My colleagues from the prairies have been explaining the situation to me. They tell me that farmers can lose up to \$8 million per day and that they will not get it back.

There are two competing principles here, Mr. Chairman, that of free collective bargaining and the Government not interfering with that, and the principle of legislating for the common good of the country. I sometimes wish we could put the farmers in the same room with the unions and employers, but I know that is difficult in a country as large as this. I say that apropos the position I was prepared to take, to keep an open mind on this legislation.

The Hon. Member for Regina West in a very careful, articulate and good speech, set this out clearly when he said that this Party has not been hung up on the rigid proposition that because this Bill legislates people back to work we automatically must say we are against it. That is not the case at all. I think the Hon. Member said that we are prepared to consider each problem on a case-by-case basis.

The public must understand, and I think it will, that what has happened is that the Government has thrown in a kicker in Clause 4. It has said that the Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act will apply; in other words, the six and five will apply. They sneaked the six and five into the Bill. It would have been better not to have done that, but to treat this Bill as bills have been treated in the past. In that case, this Party might have been able to look at this in a different way.

I should like to turn to some remarks made by the Hon. Member for North Vancouver-Burnaby. I agree with him when he said that this legislation is the worst labour legislation since the time of the Roman Empire. I am not familiar with the legislation that existed in the days of the Roman Empire but I gather he meant it was bad. Why is he voting for the legislation if it is the worst since legislation of the Roman Empire? I see the Hon. Member in the House. He is my good friend and comes from the same area of the country. If this legislation is so bad, and I agree with him,—Clause 4 shows that—why does he vote for it?

He went on to say that free men should not be legislated into a straightjacket. I agree with that, Mr. Chairman. Free women ought not to be legislated into a straightjacket either. The Hon. Member said that, and then he voted for the Bill. I think we must be consistent here. It seems to me that the Hon. Member might be trying to have his cake and eat it too.

• (1900)

I want to conclude by making two points on this particular Clause; one is a comment and one is a question. Some of my constituents might ask, "If you are opposed to this Bill, why are you letting it go through today?" I want to answer that question. It seems to me that some bills should be delayed. There are reasons for delaying bills, but I do not see the sense of it in this case for a very practical reason. The reason is that