

Pacific Coast Longshoremen Dispute

Mr. Nicholson: Would the hon. member please answer my question?

Mr. Douglas: The statement I made was perfectly true. I said the minister was sitting in splendid isolation reading the press releases of the employers association and passing them on in the form of answers to the House of Commons at question time. That is exactly what he has done. The information he passed on to this house is information which, in the main, has been received from the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association.

Mr. Nicholson: On a question of privilege. I absolutely deny that statement. Just as much information has been forthcoming from a number of sources. It was certainly not only from the employers associations.

Mr. Douglas: I am prepared to leave it to any impartial reader to go over the answers by the minister during the past two weeks and determine whether those answers have not always been coloured by the minister's prejudice in favour of the employers association.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Douglas: There is no doubt about it. Let anyone read the statement the minister made today as to whether or not the foremen could serve two masters—whether they ought to serve the union or the management. It was irrelevant to the point under discussion, which is whether any group of workers, supervisory personnel or not, should have the right to bargain collectively in connection with wages, hours and conditions of labour.

● (12:30 p.m.)

I should like to know first whether or not the government is prepared now to appoint some outstanding Canadian as a mediator, who will have the respect of both parties to this dispute. He could investigate all the facts, endeavour to bring the parties together, and make a report to the minister and the house as to what hope there is for an immediate solution. I appreciate that the minister is going out to British Columbia himself, but the minister was out last week end and that visit was not very productive of results. Someone ought to be sent there who will be able to investigate in detail that is the real source of the trouble on the waterfronts in British Columbia and make a report to the minister as to what ought to be done. Long before that, such a mediator would have considerable success, I am sure, in bringing both parties together and getting a resumption of work.

The second thing is, I believe this matter could be settled very quickly if the Minister of Labour or Prime Minister were prepared to say today that legislation will be brought in to amend the Canada Labour Relations Act, whereby supervisory personnel up to a certain level would be allowed to bargain collectively by forming their own association and by forming their own collective bargaining agency. This would go a long way toward settling the problem, and I assure the minister that if he wants to bring in such an amendment today he will have the support of the members of this party in giving that legislation first, second and third reading in the house. Even if the government announced that it intended to bring down such legislation I think the dispute would end very quickly and result in getting the parties concerned around the negotiating table.

I do urge the government to stop shilly-shallying, to stop doing nothing and to face up to what is a national emergency. The government must take some steps now to get shipping resumed on the west coast before any further hardship is imposed upon the people of that area and upon grain producers in western Canada.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Acadia): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join with previous speakers in urging the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) and the government to take a real hard look at the problem which exists on the west coast in respect of shipping, and the effects it has had and will have on production, particularly in western Canada. Production is backing up all across Canada because of this tie-up, and the country is crying today for some kind of labour leadership from the government. I do not think anyone could go back through history and find another year in which the country has been so designed by one strike after another.

During the minister's remarks today he more or less pleaded with the house to tell him what to do. He said he had tried this and that and now was at a loss as to how to solve this problem. He told us he had been out on the west coast last week, had asked one party concerned whether he should stay, and was told that he should not. He then asked the other party and was also told that he should not. There seemed to be almost a unanimous feeling that he should go back to Ottawa. He is now telling us to have hope because he is going back out again.

The minister has told us that there is no strike and no lockout. Never before has there been a labour situation in Canada where it