

Government Orders

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): He is no longer in the process.

Mrs. Wayne: There has been absolutely no indication as to how the chairman feels about the final offer selection. I think it is most important. I have to say in the end that what we were looking at was appointing five people and saying that in our district, if there is a final offer selection coming forth, one of those five people would be appointed. Their period of time would only be for three years. They are totally independent. They know their length of time is three years and they are appointed for that period of time to enter into this sort of negotiation.

It is very important and it is very key because I have to say that not only will it not be right, but we will know that it is not right if the chairman is leaning one way or the other. The key to this is an independent chairman. I have to say to my friends from out west who are members of the NDP not to worry, it does not always come out in favour of management. In most cases it comes out in favour of union.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. member for an instructive lesson in labour relations in her part of the world, which I know she was very much involved in. It only makes my point. Some are arguing that the final offer selection has a bias to it, that it all depends on which end of the decision they are. There is no inherent bias one way or the other.

However, I do think it is important to make a distinction because members here have tried to indicate that somehow the mediator was imposing a settlement of 65 cents. The mediator has no power to impose anything. All the mediator does is facilitate the process and make suggestions as to what he or she may think is the best way of resolving the dispute.

Parties are quite in their right to disregard the mediator's proposals. He or she is simply there to try to find a solution. If it is rejected, that is when the mediation no longer applies and the parties can do it themselves. In this case they were incapable of doing it themselves and that is why we are in the House debating it today.

An arbitrator, on the other hand, does have authority to prescribe a solution. In this case, the bill says very explicitly that both parties can come together and recommend an arbitrator. It is up to whomever they choose. I would think it would be in their interest to get somebody who is mutually acceptable. I am not sure of the procedure used in the hon. member's case when she was mayor but I do know that in this case we have set out in the bill that the arbitrator can be a decision of both parties.

If they fail to come to a decision even on that because of the various chemistries at work then we will appoint an arbitrator,

and I can guarantee that it would be someone who is totally and completely objective in the matter, whose only interest would be to find a proper settlement based upon what the final best offers of the two parties would be. My hope would be that the mediator would be somebody chosen by both management and labour.

• (1710)

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out that there are already losers in this situation and those are the hundreds of thousands of farmers, many of whom are going to lose drastically as a result of what has happened over the last eight or ten days.

It seems strange to me and to them that the government of the country will grant groups the power to destroy their economic viability and not allow them a seat at the table. That is the situation. Inasmuch as that is what is happening, where the hundreds of thousands of people in agriculture are suffering as a result of this and do not have a seat at the table, their representative is the hon. minister who has brought forward this document. Inasmuch as this document represents the interests of the people in agriculture, I support the minister because we must move this forward.

If the minister and the government of the country will pass a resolution or the necessary legislation that will allow grain to move through the Seattle port when it is having its strike, the agricultural community will not be injured at all and everyone will allow this strike and negotiate until the cows come home.

I support the minister because he is representing the injured third party in this whole process. I am prepared to vote in favour of this bill.

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, I would like to say to the hon. member that the fact we are sitting here shows we recognize the third party that is not here is very important. We do not like to agree on such a bill that will become a law, but it does not mean we do not have to take great care in how we resolve the conflict on the shores. We agree on the basis of the bill, but what will happen after that?

I would like the minister to understand that the mediator who was named by him, which is within his power, was representing the law and he agreed. I read it in the newspaper. His proposition was 65 cents. The minister tells me that we do not have to talk about that, but concretely it is a very good way of seeing what we are doing.

The real fact is that for everybody there this agreement between the mediator and the employees has all the chances in the world of being an agreement that will be kept by the employer and be agreed to by the arbitrator who will be named. Understanding what is going on makes me think that it will be