

Government Orders

should not become an arbitrator. How can the parties trust anyone who will make suggestions if they know that, in case of disagreement between them, that person will turn the suggestions into obligations?

I think that instead of setting conditions, the mediator could report to the minister, who could in turn report to the Human Resources Committee—since there is no Labour Committee yet, but we will remedy that—or even to this House in order to discuss the issue with all members and parties concerned, rather than immediately determining the conditions after fifteen hours of strike, because that will be the case.

For those who are familiar with labour relations, it is the same thing as for tripartite tribunals. One union representative, one employer representative and a so-called neutral arbitrator. As we know, the decision is always two against one. The arbitrator takes sides. Expenses can be reduced by naming only one instead of three since the result of the vote is already known, even if we do not know at the outset which party the arbitrator will support.

Therefore, the Official opposition will vote against the bill at second reading and we will introduce a series of amendments in committee of the Whole House, hoping that the government will accept them and allow this House, as unanimously as possible, to encourage labour relations that are as fair, acceptable, normal and modern as possible in the port of Vancouver.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The agreement was that there could be twenty minutes for comments. Is there unanimous consent?

We now resume the debate with the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

• (1915)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been a member of this House for 15 or 16 months now, and I would not have thought that we would have to pass two special pieces of legislation for the same port in such a short time. In little over a year, this is the second time we see that there is something wrong in this work environment.

If I remember correctly, last year the minister in charge, the Minister of Human Resources Development, possibly because of the scope of his duties or maybe because known facts were not taken into account, did not follow up on that special legislation and, now, we have to pass back to work legislation for another group of workers.

Not only did we not learn anything from last year's experience, but we do not seem to be learning very much from the

present situation either. I was watching the news on TV, tonight, and I noticed that the transportation sector is in turmoil over labour relations. There are potential labour disputes in the railway industry and in ports all over Canada. The message this legislation sends will be important for future negotiations in these sectors.

If the parties are not convinced of the importance of agreeing among themselves, if we give them the habit of waiting for a third party to settle their problems for them, we create the type of work relations which now prevail in the port of Vancouver. I think that an imposed solution is unacceptable and never brings about suitable results. Therefore, it is important that we send the message to other economic sectors that parties must pursue negotiations as far as the process allows.

The official opposition felt that a debate on this legislation was urgently needed, but I think citizens have a right to know that this urgency is not the result of this one incident. It is the result of the government's lack of foresight, as it has known about the problems at the port of Vancouver for some time now.

The government was aware of problems in this area but did nothing about them. And now, it steps in and says to the people involved, as if they were children, that because they could not work things out among themselves that it is going to have to do it for them. This only perpetuates the idea that they do not have to negotiate with each other to find durable and constructive ways to improve their working climate.

The minister's announcement that an investigating committee will be struck is interesting, but we must ensure that the parties will participate and will find solutions. I think that even if we agree that a mediator must be named and that people must be legislated back to work, the current legislation should allow negotiations to carry on and should not impose an outside solution which, at any rate, will never satisfy anyone.

I think that we will know we have succeeded in transforming labour relations at the port of Vancouver when a collective agreement is signed without third-party intervention and when all of the parties concerned have the impression that they signed an agreement which is to their advantage.

When both parties are ready to be reasonable, they will realize that working conditions are better during a period covered by a collective agreement when it is signed and accepted by all parties involved. This is how we can break the vicious cycle that labour relations at the port of Vancouver have been stuck in.

Hopefully, this will be the last time during this Parliament that we will have to bring in special legislation, because it is always a sign that the system is ineffective.