

Maintenance of Ports Operations Act, 1986

Mr. Parry: Stop the propaganda.

Mr. Rodriguez: Where were you for the last two weeks?

Mr. Cassidy: You could have put this up last week and you know it.

Mr. Rodriguez: You did not have the Bill ready this morning.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps the Chair can assist. The Hon. Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) has risen and asked for consent to a motion which was described in detail to the House. There was not unanimous consent. There now seems to be an indication, as evidenced by the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), that the members of the New Democratic Party are at least partially prepared to get on with Bill C-24. The Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) has made it very clear that the Official Opposition was prepared to accept the original motion.

Perhaps, in order to expedite the matter, we might put it aside for a few minutes during which the House Leaders can consult and come back to the Chair and the chamber, if that would help to expedite the matter. It is a suggestion that might be acceptable.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I want to agree to your suggestion. I think we have a real disposition in this Party that we start debate today on second reading. We certainly want to finish it by tomorrow.

It may be wise if the House Leaders have a chance to meet and work out some of the details. It is a very important issue in the country and I think we can work out the details if we can get together for a few minutes.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, having regard to those statements and your assistance, perhaps we might agree to proceed with the second reading of Bill C-24, after which we will try to work out that kind of arrangement.

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the suggestion of the Deputy Prime Minister. Is there unanimous agreement?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MAINTENANCE OF PORTS OPERATIONS ACT, 1986

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of Labour) moved that Bill C-24, an Act to provide for the maintenance of ports operations, be read a second time and, by unanimous consent, referred to Committee of the Whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the introduction of legislation into Parliament is usually among the more welcome of the tasks that fall to a Minister of the Crown. This should particularly be the case for a relatively new Minister in a relatively new session of the Parliament of Canada. It is, therefore, unfortunate that I find myself introducing the present Bill with certain regret. That regret is occasioned by the Government having to intervene in a labour dispute in order to achieve something which the Parties normally are expected to do and should be able to do themselves. I refer, of course, to the termination of their work stoppage and the resolution of their differences.

My reluctance to intervene in this dispute should not be confused, however, with a hesitation to assume my responsibilities and take decisive action in the broader public interest. Therefore, I recommend the present Bill, the Maintenance of Ports Operations Act, 1986, to the House and urge its expeditious passage.

[Translation]

The Canada Labour Code provides a framework for the conduct of collective bargaining in federal industries. For the most part, those industries are essentially of public interest involving key transportation and communications activities that are vital to the economy of our country and the well-being of its citizens. The thrust of the Canada Labour Code places the prime responsibility for bargaining and resolving disputes on the parties themselves. However, it is recognized that they may require help in what may at times prove to be a complex task.

The Code, therefore, provides for conciliation and mediation procedures which may be invoked to assist the parties in reaching their ultimate goal of concluding or renewing a collective agreement.

[English]

It is only as a very last resort that governments should intervene in the collective bargaining process, and such interventions should be minimal if we are to maintain respect for the law and the institutions of Parliament. In the present case, we have unfortunately reached a last resort stage. The parties failed in their efforts to resolve the dispute in direct negotiations between themselves, and subsequently failed to take full advantage of the range of expert conciliation that was extended to them. Following a breakdown in the negotiations in early October, the employer exercised its admittedly legal right to impose a lock-out which was lifted after three days in an effort to promote further bargaining. On October 29, I appointed two mediators to assist in the negotiations. On November 14, I met personally with the two bargaining committees and appealed to them to resolve this dispute through negotiation. Nevertheless, the parties remained unable to resolve their differences.

The inability of the parties to resolve their dispute, indeed their wilful abdication of their responsibility to one another and to the Canadian public, has forced the Government to bring about a conclusion to a work stoppage which the