

*Government Orders*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** As you may well imagine, Madam Speaker, it is a truly exceptional occasion when the member for Trois-Rivières is given this opportunity to ensure that one of the laws of Canada is amended to deal with a problem that relates specifically to the riding of Trois-Rivières.

I would like to start by thanking the Minister of Labour and his officials, who did an excellent job. I would also like to mention the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the New Democratic Party and their labour critics, all of whom were instrumental in making it possible for us to proceed as soon as the bill was ready and on relatively short notice, to deal with an unpardonable situation, both in our legislation and in the lives of the longshoremen of Trois-Rivières.

Perhaps I may also give a short summary of this case which I have been working on for more two months, a case that is truly incredible, Madam Speaker, and I am sure you will agree.

Section 34, which the House is being asked to amend this morning, was adopted in 1973. The collective agreement of the longshoremen of Trois-Rivières expired at the end of 1985. Since that time, Madam Speaker, the longshoremen of Trois-Rivières have been without a collective agreement, which means they have had no wage increases and no increases in terms of their pension fund. They have had nothing since 1985, and they have been very patient. They managed to get geographic certification so that people working in Trois-Rivières, both in the port of Trois-Rivières and the port of Bécancour, could at last officially negotiate as one unit with the Maritime Employers Association.

The employees, or should I say longshoremen, who work in Trois-Rivières and those who work in Bécancour are both covered by the same certification.

The spirit of clause 34 was that, whether in Trois-Rivières harbour, in Bécancour harbour or elsewhere, a marine employer was required to appoint a representa-

tive to bargain with the legitimate local union. For some years now, Madam Speaker, there has been strife between marine employers in Trois-Rivières and Bécancour harbours resulting in proceedings after proceedings. They went to the Superior Court, the Federal Court, to all of them. They asked for injunctions and everything else. Meanwhile, the employees, the dockers in Trois-Rivières and Bécancour, have no one to talk to across the bargaining table to reach a collective agreement. This is not about the employer and the employees disagreeing on the terms of the agreement, but about employees not even having a management representative to discuss their working conditions with. That is what this is about. The intent of clause 34, Madam Speaker, is not to allow employers to fight among themselves and not to settle with the employees across the table.

This explains the significance of this bill and why it is important that it be passed quickly. The dockers have run out of patience and are now on strike. They have been in a legal strike position for a year I think, but they only went on strike a couple of months ago, and rightly so. This is the only pressure tactic left to them to make their employers understand that they have to stop fighting among themselves and sit down and talk. You realize that once the legislation is passed forcing the employers to appoint a representative to bargain with the dockers, this will provide, to the employers at least, a way to solve the problem between these two harbours.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to read into the record of the House of Commons, the legal text to stress the importance of the Code and the spirit that had motivated those who drafted it originally, spirit which, unfortunately, as we can see today, was lost.

The proposed amendments provide that, when the Canadian Labour Relations Board certifies a local trade union, it may appoint an employer representative of its own choosing if the employer does not do it himself within the time frame specified by the Board. The representative thus named is deemed to be the employer of all the employees in the bargaining unit for the purposes of Part I of the Code and he is invested by law with all the powers needed to perform the duties and obligations of an employer, including—and most important—the power to conclude a collective agreement.