

from the consumers at the other end of the commercial pipeline. The unions have nothing but the dues of their own members with which to pay a fine. In reality, the fines against the union and against the company are not by any means equal. They favour the company.

Nevertheless, I am glad that the minister sent his representative who had some prospect of getting some movement on the pension question. He was able for the first time to bring the employers to discuss that issue.

• (1250)

I am hoping that the arbitration will be able to deal sensitively with the issue of pensions and other issues on the table.

I also want to support the idea that there should be an arbitration board, one named by the employer, one named by the union and the chair named by the minister.

I want to refer to my own experience. I have had no direct experience in arbitration, but as secretary of my local union for 12 years in a factory that made corrugated paper boxes, the union that is now the Canadian Paperworkers' Union, I had a good deal of indirect experience with arbitration and much direct experience with the steps leading to arbitration. I started as an employee doing unskilled work, moving stock around the plant, becoming eventually a machine operator in the press department. I also became a steward and then an officer in the local. As such, I participated both in the negotiations with the company, which were at first annual and then biennial, and in the settlement of grievances or disciplinary situations.

I think it is very clear that people who are engaged in the same work not only are better able to defend their fellow workers but are better able also to decide when a proposed line of defence is unreasonable. In other words, there is some peer judgment exercised by a local union in the matter of its members' individual disputes. There is also a great weight on the local union not to ask in collective bargaining for something that is unreasonable. In my union, and I believe in other unions such as this one, offers by the company must be brought back to

the members for a vote. The recommendation of the executive or the bargaining committee, one way or the other, sometimes is overturned by the membership vote.

What I am illustrating is that there is important knowledge and expertise to be had from a union appointee to an arbitration board. Without question, there is important knowledge and expertise to be had from an employer appointee. I cannot speak so directly of that.

I seriously urge the government to consider enlarging the board in the way that has been suggested by some of my colleagues on this side. I think if the government were to do that, it would make its initiative in this law far more credible. The reason I mention that is that the government's action to date in this matter is questionable in at least one way, and that is the outburst or whatever it was, planned or unplanned, of the minister of grains and oilseeds yesterday, which completely made a mockery of the Minister of Labour's representative sitting down with the disputing parties. To ask them to come together and discuss the very thing on which they were divided and then have the news that that does not matter because there is going to be back to work legislation in any case certainly makes bargaining impossible.

In many, many bargaining sessions between my local union and our employer, Continental Can, the question of trust, the question of confidence in the bargaining process was essential. During the 18 years I worked there, we did not have a strike. I do not claim that was because of my participation, but I am saying that the union and the company were both willing to reach a compromise on all those occasions.

I do not suppose that the cabinet was responsible for the intervention of the minister of grains and oilseeds but because of the unfortunate timing with which it occurred, I think the government would get better support not only from the grain handler workers, but from other workers in general in the country, if it showed sensitivity by enlarging the arbitration to a three man board.