

Labour Conditions

The bill I drafted contained a provision with respect to wage increases which, as I said before, we understood at that time had been the subject of agreement between the parties. It is true we understood also they were connected with some other matters which formed part of the package. Not being privy to the offers and counter-offers, other than by gossip and hearsay, what else could one do? If I had been in the minister's position, and I say this quite humbly, perhaps things would have been started a lot faster than they were. If the minister had had any really serious desire to deal with this matter he would have done so long before he got pushed into it.

The bill before us contains a provision which, no matter how you dress it up, no matter how you misinterpret what the effects might be, no matter how you want to qualify it, calls for compulsory arbitration based on sneakiness. There is not and has not yet been exhibited any intention on the part of the government to allow the other people who were involved in this discussion to tell parliament what their views are. We have had one of three sides presented and we are being asked, under the rules, to accept that statement as the gospel truth.

The worst feature about the bill is that parliament is being asked to force the unknown upon two elements in our society. Parliament is being asked to legislate for some unknown thing in the future, a most unique sort of proposal. Parliament is being asked to say to the Shipping Federation of Canada: We do not know what this is all about, but we think Dr. Picard will be able to find out and he will force you to do certain things. We are being asked to say to the longshoremen who are working there: We do not know anything about the procedures of loading or unloading ships, but we are going to force you to accept what Dr. Picard tells us, you should accept that, because he does not know anything about it either. This is what I consider to be the worst feature of the bill, and I believe it should be rejected. It does not matter who said what or who did not say what or whether was an agreement about certain things, which I submit the amendment seeks to work out. The principal feature, which I understand the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr) presented with some force, as did the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), was that we were being asked to legislate some unknown quality in the future, and impose upon unsuspecting people some

unknown provision relating to their wages, hours and working conditions.

Since wages have a connection with prices and profits we are being asked to legislate on one aspect of the economic activity in the longshore industry. The natural follow-up when you start to legislate on wages—and this is why I was reluctant to introduce my draft bill, and I am sure this is why the minister is reluctant, and why the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (Mr. Marchand) is able to say his feelings about compulsory arbitration are such as to prevent his accepting something even approximating compulsory arbitration,—is that parliament must step in and legislate with regard to the other two aspects as well. This is an extremely dangerous step for anybody who has any sincere desire to see free collective bargaining take place. This is another reason I think the bill should be rejected. It would be one more interference with the whole structure of prices, administration and profits. I am not saying that at some time this might not be a desirable thing. However, it is most unfair to extract one item and say we are going to impose particular conditions in respect of it, but allow the other two aspects to run free.

I do hope, even though there may be rancour and harsh feelings, perhaps some words said that would have been better left unsaid, that the minister will seriously consider accepting the proposal made by the hon. member for York South, namely referring the subject matter of this bill to a committee, so that parliament can get the story from all those who desire to appear before that committee. Perhaps on that basis parliament can come to some conclusion as to whether or not there was an agreement between the parties.

As the situation is now, we have one of three sides of the case and we are being asked to accept the hon. gentleman's word as gospel truth, because the rules say so. We are being asked to disregard whatever views the Shipping Federation or the longshoremen may have about this particular matter. The minister would be well advised to do this. If he does not, if he insists upon the course of ramming this particular legislation through parliament, he will be demeaning parliament. I, for one, simply cannot participate in parliament's being asked to legislate yellow dog contracts into existence for this union.

● (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate at this time and very briefly to express my strong opposition to this proposed