

*West Coast Ports Operations Act*

Now, this is a prime example of what has happened with regard to labour relations in Canada. And then he stands in this House and has the gall to tell us that he believes in free collective bargaining. I want to ask the Minister of Labour, why in goodness name did it take from January until November for the Government to come forward with some constructive proposals with regard to this dispute? Where, may I ask the Minister of Labour, was the process of mediation? Mediation did not play any part in this dispute solely because the employer decided it was to his advantage to sit back and wait. This was at the expense of the farmers, business people, railway workers and others in western Canada. The port employers decided to lock out the workers. It is important that we identify the fact that those workers were not on strike but were locked out by their employer.

• (1550)

It is unfortunate that we did not go through the mediation process whereby the port management would have called for a mediation officer and the workers would have called for a mediation officer. Those discussions and negotiations would have carried on without any interruption until such time as the mediation officer helped to resolve that dispute. I criticize the Government very strongly on the attitude it has displayed here.

There is another area of very deep concern. I want the western farmers, the railway workers and those in the port areas to recognize that, while this dispute is going on, the port at Roberts Bank with its coal facilities is carrying on uninterrupted. There is a long-term agreement whereby the workers, port management and railways work together to facilitate the movement of commodities.

There have been years of confrontation with the federal Government. There has not been a strong feeling of understanding between the workers, grain growers and railway workers. There should be a proposal that management and labour come forward with programs protecting the rights of everyone. Our ports could carry on in a strong and efficient manner in co-operation with everyone concerned.

It is sad today that the Government has chosen to bring in legislation that will send the workers back to work. We agree the port facilities must be opened and work must resume. However, we all recognize the need to protect the rights of all those concerned rather than bring in this kind of legislation. This legislation does not deal specifically with the dispute. What it does is order the workers and management to reopen the port under their existing agreement. If an agreement is not reached by Monday next, the Government will arbitrarily bring in the provisions of Bill C-124, the six and five program. If the workers do not co-operate and carry out their duties in a responsible way, they will be subjected to jail sentences. We in this House of Commons have a responsibility to see that everyone is treated in a fair and equitable manner. The farmers of western Canada do not want to see the workers legislated back to work.

I want to talk for one moment about 50 railroaders in Revelstoke, B.C. who were ordered back to work because of a

slowdown. This legislation will respond to the question of a slowdown. A slowdown will be considered an illegal strike. Who will determine whether there is a slowdown if products do not move in a smooth and efficient way? The company will call upon the Government and the Government will appoint a judge to hear both sides. This is what happened in the dispute at Revelstoke where 50 railroaders were fined \$500 and ordered back.

If we believe in free collective bargaining and co-operation, especially during these tough economic times, and in moving our commodities in a swift and efficient way, we must work together, not in a spirit of confrontation but co-operation. We should discuss bringing forward not just short-term but long-term proposals to protect the interests of everyone.

In his remarks the Conservative Member advocated arbitrary compulsion. That is what he suggested. The Government should look at a more positive way of dealing with the situation. The problems in the Great Lakes dispute were resolved through the normal negotiating process and productivity increased by 15 per cent. That should be a lesson to show us that there is a way. The workers on the west coast are just as concerned about the movement of goods and productivity.

We have a serious problem. The Labour Code is not serving us because of legislation being brought in by this Government. The Minister referred to his telegram of October 25. This was sent while negotiations were taking place. The Minister of Labour knows full well that when negotiations are taking place it is a very vital time and he knows the importance of the two sides dealing in good faith. I want to quote a portion of his telegram because it shows the antagonism this Government has created:

The history of labour relations between your organizations over the last 13 years and resultant work stoppages is a dismal record to those who advocate and defend free collective bargaining. The BCMEA and the ILWU have always expressed a distaste for government intervention yet seem incapable of resolving their disputes without such intervention. The record indicates that not once in the past 13 years, except during the AIB regime, have you been able to arrive at a collective agreement short of intervention of high-level mediation from Ottawa or Parliament itself.

Surely that is a message that the Minister of Labour has failed dismally in trying to bring about the positive approaches to the problems on the west coast. I urge the Minister to meet with representatives of all parties in this House so that we can dedicate our time and efforts, meeting with labour, management and the grain growers, in an attempt to resolve this very serious problem so that people can live decently. This legislation will seriously set back labour relations on the west coast. Government, the grain growers and everyone else concerned should get together to deal with this problem in a responsible and orderly manner.

I wish to point out another area where the Conservatives were also brave. They are pretty brave when it comes to threatening other governments with grain produced by our farmers. When they were in Government, the first thing they did was bring in their grain embargo on the wheat we produced. Their External Affairs critic now wants to do the same