

Labour Dispute at Montreal

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very serious matter.

Mr. Starr: Of course it is.

Mr. Speaker: I think perhaps we should try to limit the debate to the substance of the matter brought to the attention of the house by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot.

Mr. Starr: I agree with you entirely, Mr. Speaker. This is a very serious matter. I was only referring to the attitude of the government with regard to it.

• (11:20 a.m.)

Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I rise to a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not know why my hon. friend should begin what I hope will be a constructive submission in this tone. The government are not opposed to this motion; we welcome it. We recognize that this is an important matter. That is the reason the Minister of Labour intervened. I would ask my hon. friend, for whom we all have the greatest regard, in view of the fact that his leader is now with him and that his leader wants to set a new tone in debate in this house, to—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Ricard: Remember what happened in 1960.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I now ask the co-operation of all hon. members so that, from now on, they try to deal only with the motion introduced by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot (Mr. Ricard), that is the important matter of public urgency, the stoppage of activities in Montreal harbour.

[*English*]

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter. Recognizing its seriousness, we on this side feel it should be discussed in the house at this time. We feel very strongly that the situation which now prevails on the Montreal docks has been brought about by the ineptness of this government in dealing with the matter.

I want to refer back to July of last year, specifically to July 14, 1966, when the government introduced Bill No. C-215, an act respecting certain conditions of employment of dock workers at the ports of Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec. This bill was discussed on that day and we pointed out to the

government the error it was making in taking that step. We objected in particular to the preamble to the bill, part of which read as follows:

And whereas an industrial inquiry commission to inquire into those certain matters has been appointed under the said act, and it is in the national interest that the conclusions of the said commission with respect thereto be carried into effect without delay following receipt of the report of the said commission—

I pointed out during the debate on the bill, Mr. Speaker, that this was contrary to the collective bargaining arguments that the government has always hidden behind. As recorded at page 7674 of *Hansard* for July 14, 1966 I said:

A commissioner can be appointed. No one will object to that. The commissioner can go to work and eventually, upon hearing both sides and investigating the situation completely, he can make a report to the Minister of Labour who in turn should refer that report to the interested parties as a basis for collective bargaining.

The government ignored this suggestion, even though the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), the next speaker for the New Democratic party, agreed that this was the proper procedure to take.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what has happened? A report has been made by the commissioner of inquiry, Mr. Picard. This report was made to the Minister of Labour. Did the Minister of Labour feel there should be ample opportunity for the interested parties in the dispute to sit down with him or to consult amongst themselves before the report was implemented, to see whether they would interpret the report in the same way and agree on what should be done? No; the minister arbitrarily imposed the report on both parties without reference to them at all.

We now have a situation where the parties interpret the report differently. One party reads it one way and the other party reads it another way. Consequently there is a tie-up in the port of Montreal, where some 40 ships are standing idle waiting to be unloaded. Fruits, vegetables and other commodities of this country are being allowed to rot while the government sits quietly by contending that someone else should see that this national crisis is resolved.

I know the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Martin) has a tremendous responsibility and is trying to show his concern for the country. Surely in his wisdom he could prevail on the Minister of Labour and ask him to forgo his obstinate, arrogant attitude that the government is not responsible and that it is up to