

Labour Relations

concern every member of this House. It ought to, and does, concern the public. I know, from my conversations with men and women in the unions of this country, that it concerns them; and, of course, it also concerns management.

It is not necessary to elaborate in this House on the total collective loss to the community of continued and excessive work stoppages, because all hon. members are fully aware of the hardship, the difficulties, the bitterness and the social strife created by these work stoppages. There is another aspect which I think all hon. members would agree is paramount in our consideration of undue work stoppages. I refer to the colossal waste of our productive capacity and manpower in terms of the men and women in the work force.

It is interesting that the history of work stoppages in the last several years more than illustrates the fact that we have a serious problem. The House of Commons has been called together to legislate the end of work stoppages a number of times since the summer of 1972. In October, 1972, the House of Commons ended the longshoremen's strike in eastern Canada. The House of Commons ended the railway strike in August and September of 1973 by legislation. Further, the House of Commons ended the strike of the grain handlers on the west coast in 1974. Since then the House of Commons again acted in respect of the longshoremen on the west coast and ended that lawful strike. Just recently the House of Commons ended the lawful strike of the longshoremen operating at the three river ports of Trois-Rivières, Quebec City and Montreal.

The apologists for this particular method of ending labour strife believe an ad hoc approach of this sort is the most effective means of responding to a difficulty while at the same time retaining the respect and the right of free collective bargaining with the mutual or collateral rights of walk-out and strike. However, if I may say so, those who cling to that position—I know there are some on the government side of the House—are a long way behind public opinion, because clearly the public has little sympathy with an absolutely unstructured method of solving work stoppages which affect either essential services or the totality of the public interest. I say very pointedly to my colleagues on the government side that despite what some of the apologists for the government may say, there is growing doubt within the cabinet itself that the present ad hoc system is adequate.

As some hon. members know, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) some months ago delivered a confidential document to the cabinet in which he very honestly faced up to some of the specific problems. I shall quote a paragraph of that document and ask government members especially who are sometimes too quick to support the present ad hoc system, which I do not think is satisfactory, to note it because it comes from a document that is before the cabinet today. I quote:

There have been disruptive work stoppages this past year and I sense growing pressure to review and revise labour relations law and policy—to have another task force research and produce volumes. The Woods report was very useful and the studies are still relevant. That work led to a comprehensive revision of our labour relations code which came into force after intensive lobbying less than twenty-four months ago.

[Mr. Fraser.]

The minister goes on, I think quite properly, and says:

It does not answer all of our problems and in our democratic society it never will—not if the hope is for a quiescent work force and a strike-free economy.

That is the end of the quotation. So, there clearly is a recognition on the part of the government of the day, despite statements made by some of its own members, that the government or at least the Minister of Labour is not satisfied with the present ad hoc method of solving these crippling work stoppages when they affect essential services or, as I said before, when the total effect of the strike may not confine itself merely to essential services but affects the national interest.

● (1610)

Therefore, I think it is true to say that there is far greater agreement that we must find a better way, among all members of this House, the public, members of the labour force, management and other interested groups within our community, than is now apparent. This better way has been apparent to us for quite some time and it is interesting that the Minister of Labour, in the document sent recently to his colleagues in the cabinet, referred to the Woods report.

Mr. Alexander: He stole our policy.

Mr. Fraser: My colleague is suggesting that the minister stole our policy. If the minister wishes to pluck the policy out from under us, we are prepared to look the other way or we are prepared to give it to him. It is interesting that the minister has said the Woods report is very useful and the study is still relevant. The minister should be bemused at hearing these remarks because today the first page of the business section of that very reputable gatherer and purveyor of news, the *Globe and Mail*, contains this remarkable headline, "Council established in hope of reducing stoppages in work". I quote from the article:

The federal government has established an industrial relations council of union, management and government representatives to examine ways of reducing work stoppages and labour strife and of improving the work environment.

It is interesting that the article goes on to say:

Labour Minister John Munro will be chairman, according to Gordon McCaffrey, special assistant to Mr. Munro.

I want to say, on behalf of my party, that whatever surprise we may have in finding that many years after the Woods report came out the minister is beginning to implement parts of it, nonetheless we congratulate him sincerely on taking this very excellent recommendation from the Woods report and implementing it into policy at this time. On page 170 of the Woods report the authors of the report said:

To ensure that the members of the commission—

That refers to the Public Interest Disputes Commission of which I will have something to say in a few minutes.

—have the confidence of the parties as well as the public, the Canadian Industrial Relations Council, the creation of which we recommend later, should be consulted in their selection. Once appointed, such members should have the equivalent of tenure—

Then if we read page 214 of the Woods report we see that in paragraph No. 769 the authors recommend the establish-