

West Coast Ports Operations Act

of the committee to proceed in that way; otherwise, we would have to let Clause 4 and Clause 5 pass before we could get to our amendments.

The Deputy Chairman: The Chair recognizes the Hon. Member for Vancouver East on the same point of order.

Mrs. Mitchell: Mr. Chairman, it was on Clause 4, but my colleague has a point of order.

Mr. Deans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is becoming extremely confusing. We are dealing with Clause 4 of the bill. I would ask, if you would not mind, that you allow us to deal with Clause 4 of the bill. If the Hon. Member for Yukon then wants to subsequently move another amendment, he may do so. But, surely, we can deal with Clause 4 which is now before us.

Mr. Nielsen: If that were to be done the operative amendment could not be considered. I would suggest that in order to ease the confusion, we stand Clause 4 and then get right into Clause 5. We will then move the amendment.

The Deputy Chairman: Does the House agree to stand Clause 4? The Hon. Member for Vancouver East.

Some Hon. Members: No, no.

Mrs. Mitchell: I wish to speak to Clause 4, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chairman: I have to ensure that the Hon. Member's rights are not diminished in any way. The Chair sought the consent of the House to stand Clause 4. That consent would have to be unanimous and it is clear that there is not unanimity. Accordingly, the Chair will have to recognize the Hon. Member for Vancouver East on Clause 4.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This party strongly opposes the application of the Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act which is proposed in Clause 4. We strongly oppose the six and five settlement because we feel, of course, this is no way to settle disputes. In fact, it will exacerbate problems on the waterfront.

I would like to make two or three points, Mr. Chairman, related to this. We all know this is a very serious situation in the Port of Vancouver, and as a member representing a good portion of the riding containing that port I think I can speak about this firsthand. It is a problem that concerns every sector of our economy. Not only are the longshoremen and their families very concerned about settling this dispute and getting the port open, we know that farmers, railway workers, grain handlers and people in almost every sector in society are equally concerned. There is no question but that we want the lockout in the Port of Vancouver settled. We want an end to it, and get our port operating again. This is essential to the economy of the West Coast.

Having said that, I want to spend a moment talking about the victims of this six and five cutback proposal being imposed by the Government. The longshoremen in Vancouver and, indeed, all people who support collective bargaining and the rights of trade unionists, seriously resent the kind of union

bashing that has been going on. I think it is very important that people like the Prime Minister know enough to refer to this in the correct term as a "lockout" rather than a strike. It would be very helpful also if our Central Canada media did the same.

We know, if we look back into the history of this dispute, that longshoremen did not want this lockout. They have had no settlement since the beginning of January. They work in very difficult situations. I think it is important for Members of the House to know this. It may seem they receive a fairly good hourly rate, but I think most Hon. Members should realize that many longshoremen spend three hours of unpaid time travelling to and from the hiring hall and the dock where they work. They also work in very bad weather, on nightshifts and on weekends, and safety on the docks is a major concern.

The union has been very adamant that there must be no changes in the basic contract, particularly regarding shift differentials and container destuffing.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I think it is extremely important to look at the Government's role in this dispute. We know the Government could have intervened earlier in a positive way. The Minister himself could have been much more constructive in his approach, instead of sending a very insulting and, in fact, a very intimidating kind of telegram which called both parties in this dispute dismal failures. What a way for a new Minister of Labour to start his career. The Government could also have moved in earlier, before Parliament came back, having a Government official try to settle the dispute. I am inclined to agree with union members who feel very strongly that the timing of the lockout was very convenient for employers, being just one week before Parliament resumed.

• (1850)

Finally, Mr. Chairman, if the Government had to intervene in the interests of the total economy, surely we could have had an end to the lockout and a resumption of negotiations without the six and five rollback. We oppose the six and five because we think it is grossly unfair to the public sector, and particularly unfair in the longshoremen's dispute. This is private sector employment. Bill C-152 was drafted for the public sector but now a precedent is being set by its application to the private sector.

I should like to point out that I have documents to prove that employers in Vancouver, supported by the head of the National Harbours Board, have charged 14 per cent tariffs to all customers using the Port since last January. This action was based on the anticipation of a 14 per cent increase in wages. The employers have been pocketing a 14 per cent profit all this time. How must a longshoreman feel who has been told by the Government that he is not going to receive any increase between January and July, while the employers have been charging an extra 14 per cent to cover that increase and then, after that, that he is only going to have a pay increase of 6 per