

*Labour Conditions*

action with the federal government—and it has already been pointed out that considerable poetic licence is involved in this: the CLC is actively considering this matter. What a difference between the two statements. The second part of the motion refers to the right of appeal by bodies subject to orders of the Anti-Inflation Board or the administrator to appeal their ruling to the appeal tribunal. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) when speaking tonight indicated that if there were imperfections in the appeal system, he was quite prepared to look at it again and see what changes would have to be made.

I would like to speak for a few moments about the pulp and paper strike that has been going on in our country now for some months, affecting many communities throughout the country. This strike is a broadly-based one, one that affects communities across the country. It is a labour dispute that affects practically every province, and it has tremendous detrimental effect on many communities throughout Canada. Over 25,000 members of the Canadian Pulp and Paperworkers Union in numerous towns and cities have suffered through the long and difficult months, in some cases up to seven months.

I am especially conscious of the harmful effects that this strike has had on the many industrial towns in Canada where these industries are located. My own constituency of Algoma is facing serious economic problems, not only with the shutdown of the E.B. Eddy plant in Espanola but also because of the spillover effects which this strike has had on other related industries. This area in northern Ontario has often been considered economically depressed, so you can well appreciate that a solution of this labour dispute is of prime importance to the residents of the towns and cities in the area. In Algoma, the strike is located in the town of Espanola. This one-industry town literally has been brought low as a result of the strike, with over 1,000 workers affected and the economy of the town hit rock bottom.

Many families have received virtually no financial assistance for these past four months. Family savings and investments have been used up, and many are now facing serious debt. Other services and activities in the town have been cut back or curtailed. The morale of such a one-industry town is severely damaged by this long shut-down. The effects have, however, spread significantly to virtually all communities in the Manitoulin Islands and North Shore. Support industries to the paper mill are closed or are operating under severe hardship. The number of families thus affected is multiplied enormously.

I have been approached by many individuals and small businessmen who are facing serious financial problems because of the strike, asking me to seek government assistance for them. Many residents employed in the areas north and east of Sault Ste. Marie, located in the Algoma riding in the bush operations of the Abitibi plant, are likewise without work. So the effects of a pulp and paper strike ripple out to the entire community, even into the bush lot operations and the small sawmills selling wood chips to the paper mills. The communities in northern Ontario rely primarily on mining, forestry and pulp related operations. Half of them have been idle for four to seven months, and many families have had to move to other locations and even to southern Ontario and cut their social and commu-

[Mr. Foster.]

nity ties. The resulting problems for these one-industry towns are enormous.

I believe that a very unfortunate aspect of this strike has been that it affects most severely families in the small communities and towns throughout the country where media coverage is not as good as in our large urban centres. So in some ways, for much of the country in urban Canada it has really been a forgotten strike because the media has not covered it and they have not brought the normal pressure to bear which often occurs with regard to strikes.

While it may be that some companies have suffered because of losing customers to plants in the United States, it is clear that the companies must shoulder much of the blame for lack of settlement in the negotiations. This is an industry which operates on the leader principle where the big companies tend to settle first, and then the smaller companies settle. At least, this is the theory. Often there is not a concerted effort by the smaller companies to negotiate. By the same token, the companies have not had the normal pressure to settle because of high inventories in the pulp and paper business overhanging the market.

In this connection, I do not think the Canadian people have been greatly affected by this strike, although the effect has been devastating in the small industry towns where many of the pulp and paper mills are located. However, there has not been a public outcry because there really has not been any direct shortage of paper. If there has, it has been so minimal that it has not been noticed by the general public.

Another aspect of the strike which I think is important is that many trade unionists believe there has been a deliberate challenge to the new Canadian Paperworkers Union as it is just beginning to get itself established: it was set up in 1974. We need strong unions which can adequately represent the workers in our plants and production centres, and encouragement is due to the members of the CPU because this is a relatively new union. Its resources have been quite limited, and as a result the assistance it has been able to give its membership during the strike has been limited.

During the last week or so I have been encouraged to see that negotiations are resuming in many parts of the country. There have been some settlements, and I hope there will be more. Although some people will criticize some specific aspect of the anti-inflation program, such as the appeal procedure which is the subject of this motion, I believe most people agree with the need for a program and want to see it work to combat inflation. Our inflation and unemployment rates are too high. It can be argued that our rate of inflation is lower than that of Great Britain and our unemployment rate is lower than that of the United States; however, they are both too high for Canada. As a country, we have a special stake in a good price performance and a low unemployment rate. We are a trading nation. A large percentage of our GNP comes from foreign trade, larger than nearly every other industrialized nation, so it is in our own interest to have competitive prices so that we can sell our products abroad and create jobs at home.

Likewise, on the job scene we have special circumstances in Canada compared with nearly every other industrialized western nation, because we have the fastest growing labour force—a growth rate of 50 per cent during