

the food wasted, let us do it. I say it is flaunting providence for us to let this stuff go to waste to-day, and in the end we shall pay for it unless we take immediate steps to correct the situation.

Mr. C. C. I. MERRITT (Vancouver-Burrard): I think all hon. members who have spoken this afternoon have emphasized the fact that one must be very careful not to say anything which would seem like taking sides. That is probably a wise attitude for hon. members to adopt, because even those from British Columbia cannot know the full facts of the case. One gets the viewpoints of the opposing sides, but not being on the spot, it is impossible for one to know which combination of facts to accept. There is, however, one thing upon which I think all hon. members, regardless of party, have shown complete agreement; that is, that the public interest is the most important matter we have to consider, and that in this strike the interests of the people of Canada and the whole economy of British Columbia are vitally affected.

This afternoon we heard, particularly from the mover of this motion as well as from other hon. members, how important this strike is in its effect upon the fruit crop, and I want to add a few words to show how important this strike will be in its effect upon the housing situation next winter; what an important effect the lack of the lumber which could have been produced during the period of the strike will have, particularly upon the comfort of veterans in the country during next winter, because I think inevitably these housing troubles fall most heavily upon the veteran. Then, of course, the whole economy of British Columbia is directly affected by a large-scale strike in our chief industry. I do not suppose we shall ever be able to measure accurately the extent of that loss to the province. So I cannot help feeling that whatever side one takes in this dispute, whether the side of the operators or the side of the loggers, the side of the public is much more important than either.

I should like to read an extract from an editorial which appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* of May 23 of this year, and which seemed to me to put the position very well. This was written before the failure of the last attempt at settlement by Chief Justice Sloan. The editorial states:

A swift settlement of the woodworkers' strike appears likely through mediation of Chief Justice Sloan. When it is all over it will have been

[Mr. Mayhew.]

largely a pushing match between organized labour and organized employers. Each side will take up its respective position at the place where the dispute comes to rest and business relationships will be resumed from there.

This is a rough method of arriving at industrial peace. The public, which has been squeezed in the test of strength, knows just how rough it is in its effects. Yet the government, representing the public, is content with its role as an ineffectual referee. Instead of making an intelligent analysis of the issues and informing the public of the facts, the government gives its tacit approval to the theory that economic might is economic right.

This is a long editorial; otherwise I should like to put it all on record, but in conclusion it says:

The more that the rights and powers of unions are guaranteed and defined by law, the more their duties and responsibilities will be brought under the control of law.

Until that time comes, labour and management in British Columbia will continue to batter out costly compromises by rule of thumb. The public would prefer a more sensible approach, based on law and equity.

On May 21 the *Vancouver Province* also published an editorial dealing with this matter. The editors of these newspapers probably know more about the merits of this strike than private members of this house can know, and the *Province* says:

There are so many things in connection with the strike that revolt the common sense of the ordinary man, wherever his sympathies lie.

Three of those things mentioned in the editorial are:

The idleness of nearly forty thousand men in the face of a serious building material scarcity.

The utter waste involved in the loss of millions of work hours.

The failure of either provincial or federal government to take a strong position though the interest of the public is paramount.

It seems to me these two newspapers have taken the position that has been taken by hon. members of this house, namely that the interests of the public are paramount and that it is time a lead was given by the government as to the manner in which this strike may be satisfactorily settled. With the failure of Chief Justice Sloan's last attempt I suppose the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mitchell) will have other irons in the fire and other negotiations to put forward, and I know we all wish him success in those negotiations. But, as the hon. member for Vancouver North (Mr. Sinclair) has said, this strike may easily go on for another month or so. While the woods may be closed down for that period, in order to reduce the fire hazard, I think it is almost equally important that the sawmills should be brought back into operation right away. I believe public opinion in the country and particularly in British Col-