

Pacific Coast Longshoremen Dispute

have refused to call out the gangs and they have refused to do so since last month. I am told that out of 4,000 longshoremen only 200 were called back.

Yesterday, the minister said the men were still working. My information is only 200 are working out of 4,000. These men are not staying away from work; the employers have refused to call them. When I was a boy, this was called a lockout. It seems to me it constitutes a lockout when an employer says: "Do not report for work." It is true, as the minister said, that the proviso was added "You can report for work if you are prepared to give a good day's work for a good day's pay." The men claim they are endeavouring to do so, but are prevented because the work is not well organized and because conditions on the waterfront are hazardous.

The minister says, quite properly, that this is not a strike. It is not a strike because the men, with the exception of the foremen, are not withdrawing their services. The minister also said—I do not agree with him—that it is not a lockout. I think it is, when nearly 4,000 men are told not to report to work. If it is not a strike and if it is not a lockout, what is it? The farmers of the prairies, the fruit farmers of British Columbia and the people of the lower mainland will tell the minister what it is: It is a mess. It is a mess for which this government must accept full responsibility.

We have been trying for nearly two weeks to get the government to take some action, to appoint a mediator to try to solve the difficulty which has arisen in connection with the foremen; to appoint a mediator to try to get the company to agree to call the men back to work, or at least to appoint a mediator who would investigate the conditions which obtain on the waterfront to ascertain whether or not the employers are right in saying there is a deliberate slowdown, or whether the men are right in saying the slowdown is due to the lack of supervision.

A mediator could have ascertained the facts. A mediator might have been able to bring the parties together on the understanding that the government would set up an investigation into the whole question of whether or not the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act should be amended so as to provide supervisory personnel with the right to bargain collectively.

But nothing has been done. Day after day for an entire week we have been asking the minister to do something. The minister, and

[Mr. Douglas.]

yesterday the Prime Minister, have persistently refused to take action until the whole of the west coast is tied up. Ships are not moving grain. Fruit is not being shipped. Forest products are piling up and cargoes are not being unloaded from ships waiting in the harbour. This is an appalling situation and in my view the inaction on the part of the government cannot be too strongly condemned.

It is difficult to understand why the government has refused to act in this regard. When the longshoremen in Montreal, Quebec and Trois-Rivières went on strike the government appointed Judge Lippé as mediator. They could not have appointed a better man; he did an excellent job. When there was a strike on the seaway, the government appointed Senator MacKenzie, who also proved to be an excellent mediator. When a strike was threatened in the postal department, they appointed Judge Montpetit, an excellent choice because of his familiarity with conditions in the postal department. Faced with a serious labour situation in connection with the railways, they appointed Mr. Goldenberg, a well known and highly respected negotiator. In each of these instances when the government thought the public interest was endangered, they appointed someone in an endeavour to ascertain the facts and discover whether there was an area of agreement likely to lead to the parties to the dispute being brought together. Why has not the government followed the same course in this instance? Why has nothing been done about this conflict on the west coast? Now that the strike has moved into a lock-out there is all the more reason to take some action. The government's present state of complete immobility appalls me and leaves me wondering what the underlying reasons are.

It is not enough for the Minister of Labour to sit day after day in splendid isolation reading press releases from the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association and passing them on to the House of Commons in answer to questions. This is a situation which should be thoroughly investigated.

Mr. Nicholson: Would the hon. member permit a question? Will he tell the house of a single instance, of any occasion on which the Minister of Labour read such a release?

Mr. Douglas: I refer the house to the hon. gentleman's replies, and his replies in every case sounded as though he were an advocate for the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association.