

West Coast Ports Operations Bill

computers. But if there is to be a process of automation and cybernation then surely Parliament has a responsibility, and this government has a responsibility, first to protect the job security of workers, and second to see that a substantial share of the increased productivity arising out of automation is passed on to the general public and particularly to those who work.

This is not a new problem. The former minister of labour wrestled with this as did his predecessor. We all recall in this House the problem of the firemen on the railroads. We remember the Freedman Commission being set up and we remember the Freedman report which was accepted by all parties in the House and to which the government paid lip service, the report about which practically nothing was done. The chickens are now coming home to roost and there are going to be more problems unless we tackle this problem of technological change.

For instance, in Great Britain even the union officials wanted the men to go back to work, but they would not go back. Why? Because in three years the number of dock workers in Great Britain had been reduced by 23,000. When men get into their 50's and early 60's and see automation taking over the jobs of their fellow workers, and it keeps getting closer and closer to them, these men, who have reached an age when it is not easy to learn a new trade and to get a new job, become panicstricken. They get uptight. That is why we have trouble in ports all around the world.

The fact that the government has this legislation here today is an admission of their bankruptcy of policy to deal with the question of technological change. What does this legislation do? It settles nothing. It does two things: one, it gets the government off the hook until after the federal election is over by sweeping the issue under the rug for four months; second, it helps the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association because after January 1 it will probably be easier to negotiate with the workers in the winter. This allows the B.C. Maritime Employers Association to get over the four big months of shipment and to negotiate after January 1, if they have not reached a settlement before then, under conditions that are much more favourable to the employers and much less favourable to the workers. The government should know that.

Therefore, it seems to me that we in this Parliament are being asked to approve legislation which is going to take away a very basic right of certain workers for the next four months. I think they are entitled to two things. They are entitled, first of all, to some assurance from the present Minister of Labour that the legislation with respect to technological change will be proclaimed, and secondly, that the government's program with respect to automation and cybernation will be stepped up, enlarged and made effective.

• (2050)

Additionally they have the right to know that when they do manage to work out an agreement with the employers, the Maritime Employers Association of British Columbia, that agreement will be retroactive, in the case of the longshoremens to August 1, 1972, and in the case of the grain handlers to November, 1971. That is the least to which they are entitled.

[Mr. Douglas.]

If tonight the minister can assure us that he intends to move an amendment to that effect, and tells us the clause under which he will move it, this will make it much easier for us to get on with passage of the legislation. I would like to say to him that I am sure no member in any part of the House wants to take away from any group of workers the right to strike, and we are not going to take away that right unless we provide them in return with some measure of protection, protection which in our opinion they are entitled to be given by the Parliament of Canada. Therefore I ask the minister if he can give us some information on the results of his sympathetic consideration of the proposal made by the leader of our party, and if he can assure this committee that it is his intention to move such an amendment.

Mr. O'Connell: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to give the assurance that I will be prepared to move an amendment to clause 7 in Part I of the bill, and to clause 13 in Part II of the bill, to bring about the retroactive results that have been proposed by the leader of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Deachman: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to let this clause pass without making some general remarks with respect to the situation facing us in this chamber, and particularly with respect to the situation facing us on the west coast. For hon. members who have not had the opportunity to be closely associated with it I think I can sketch the situation on the west coast for them in just a few words.

On the west coast we have had a beautiful summer. The days have been very sunny. The people are in the parks, on the beaches in Stanley Park, and driving along the Marine Drive overlooking English Bay. Throughout the summer vessels have been coming into English Bay and taking up anchorage, until now we can look at 20 vessels or more anchored there, and another 20 or so in the inner harbour along the north and east side of the city. It is a magnificent sight to see. Little sailboats go flitting in and around them. The sun and the sea make it a marvellous sight to look at—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deachman: Mr. Chairman, I seem to be working uphill against a great deal of noise not only from members of my own party but from members opposite and I wonder if I could ask for a little order.

The Chairman: Order, please. Of course the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra, like other members, is entitled to order, but having said that I hope he will quickly get to the kernel of his remarks.

Mr. Deachman: With respect, Sir, I am dealing directly with the subject before us, a strike which is tying up the city of Vancouver, the province of British Columbia, and the Prairie provinces. We have a disturbing feeling as we look at this because we know that the people of Canada are paying demurrage on these ships at a rate of from \$1,500 to \$2,500 to \$3,000 a day.

Mr. Horner: Would you believe \$4,000?

Mr. Deachman: Yes.