

Halifax Operations Act

Bill C-351, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cautionary label on alcoholic beverage container).—Mr. Robinson.

Bill C-352, An Act to amend the Post Office Act (search with warrant of suspicious material).—Mr. Robinson.

Bill C-353, An Act to amend the House of Commons Act (Internal Economy autonomy).—Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).

Bill C-354, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act.—Mr. O'Sullivan.

Bill C-355, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (preventive detention).—Mr. Orlikow.

Bill C-356, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act (equal time to opposition parties).—Mr. Orlikow.

Bill C-357, An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act (incriminating statements).—Mr. Orlikow.

Bill C-358, An Act respecting employment with the Government of Canada not covered by the Public Service Employment Act.—Mr. Orlikow.

Bill C-359, An Act to amend the Public Service Staff Relations Act.—Mr. Orlikow.

always distasteful to me to take the time of this House to bring an end to a labour-management dispute. It should not be necessary for me to reiterate my faith in the free collective bargaining system. Canada's industrial relations system reflects our heritage of fundamental western values and our belief that the common well-being can be encouraged through free collective bargaining and the constructive settlement of disputes.

The state has assumed the task of establishing a framework of rights and responsibilities within which management and organized labour are to conduct their relations. That framework places the responsibility for resolving labour-management disputes clearly on the parties to collective bargaining. There are, nevertheless, times and situations when the government, as custodian of the economy and the defender of the public interest, must assume its responsibility. This is the case today in the dispute involving the Maritime Employers' Association and local 269 of the International Longshoremen's Association in the port of Halifax.

• (1210)

Parliament must be resorted to if we are to bring an end to the lock-out which has closed the port since August 8, 1976. Parliament must legislate an end to the dispute if we are to save the port and the city of Halifax from further crippling economic damage, the effects of which have already rippled through the community, resulting in lay-offs, lost income and lost business.

I have emphasized that the government is, and remains, committed to our system of industrial relations which rests on the principle of free collective bargaining. It might be useful, therefore, if I were to summarize briefly the sequence of events which have led to the present impasse, and remind hon. members of the extended efforts deployed over ten months to resolve the dispute.

The parties to the dispute, the Maritime Employers' Association, which acts for its member steamship companies and agents employing labour, contracting stevedores and terminal operators handling vessels in the Port of Halifax, and local 269 of the International Longshoremen's Association, representing some 650 workers, have been seeking to negotiate revisions to their collective agreement which expired on December 31, 1975.

The parties met in direct negotiations on a number of occasions prior to the expiry of their previous collective agreement. As these meetings were not successful, on January 2, 1976, I appointed Messrs. C. A. Ogden and R. L. Kervin, of Labour Canada's Halifax office, as conciliation officers to assist the parties in their deliberations. Numerous meetings were held with the parties during the next two months and the conciliation officers filed their report on March 4, 1976, recommending the next step in the conciliation procedure, the appointment of a conciliation commissioner to deal with the items still in dispute.

On March 17 of this year I therefore appointed Judge Nathan Green, Q.C., of Halifax, as conciliation commissioner

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

CUSTOMS TARIFF

The House proceeded to the consideration of a ways and means motion to amend the Customs Tariff.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (for the Minister of Finance) moved:

That a ways and means motion to amend the Customs Tariff Act, laid upon the table on Wednesday, October 13, 1976, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Blais (for the Minister of Finance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-15, to amend the Customs Tariff.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

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PORT OF HALIFAX OPERATIONS ACT

MEASURE TO PROVIDE FOR RESUMPTION OF LONGSHORING

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour) moved that Bill C-14, to provide for the resumption and continuation of longshoring and related operations at the port of Halifax, be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank hon. members for the unanimous consent which they gave. As Minister of Labour, it is

[Mr. Speaker.]