

*Inquiries of the Ministry***LABOUR RELATIONS****PACIFIC COAST LONGSHOREMEN DISPUTE—
DISRUPTION OF SHIPPING AND INDUS-
TRIAL EMPLOYMENT**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the right hon. Prime Minister and ask if his attention has been drawn to the tie-up in the west coast ports arising from the fact that the Maritime Employers Association has refused since Monday to call the longshoremen to work on the ground of an alleged work slowdown? Has the Prime Minister's attention been drawn to the fact that some 45 ships with perishable goods aboard are tied up in Vancouver harbour, that grain cars are backing up to the prairies, and close to 10,000 men are going to be laid off in the lumberyards, the sawmills and logging camps in the course of the next few days?

Does not the Prime Minister consider that the time has now come for the government to intervene and perhaps appoint a mediator in the hope of bringing the parties together? I say that since this is not a dispute over wages but rather about whether or not this is a lockout or a slowdown in work.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): I have been in touch with the Minister of Labour almost hourly in this matter, but I have nothing to add to what the minister said yesterday. If he can make a supplementary statement at this time I know he will be very glad to do so.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Minister of Transport and the Minister without Portfolio I wonder whether I could ask the Prime Minister if he is aware that a few hours ago the last boat left the Queen Charlotte Islands, and that in all likelihood if the strike or lockout, or whatever it is, continues the people on these islands will be deprived of mail, food, medical supplies and all other commodities which normally reach the islands by ship. Would the Prime Minister contact the Department of Transport to see whether or not an airlift arrangement might be made to service those and other communities in a similar position?

Mr. George Muir (Lisgar): A supplementary question to the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker. In view of the serious situation developing with regard to the marketing of our wheat, I wonder whether the minister has

[Miss LaMarsh.]

anything to report to the house on the possibility of a settlement of this strike.

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I cannot hold out much hope at this time for an immediate settlement. I think the house should know that the people who have not been called out from work, according to my information, are the ones who were dismissed for the alleged slowdown tactics which are the subject of the proceedings in the courts. Some longshoremen are working. It is unfortunate that the number is very small, but some are working as my latest report shows.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The minister is a very good lawyer who has done well as Minister of Labour, and I would ask him to give us a further statement. Surely with a national emergency developing, as it is, in consequence of this situation the time has now come, if it is not overdue, to appoint a mediator. How long must the producers of wheat suffer and our wheat contracts be held up because of failure to act?

Mr. Nicholson: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, I should like to have some suggestion as to just what should be mediated. There is no question here of wages, fringe benefits or anything like that. Parliament has vested the Canada Labour Relations Board with a certain jurisdiction. A group of supervisory personnel, so declared, applied to the Canada Labour Relations Board for certification. The Canada Labour Relations Board has decided that they are not an appropriate union to carry on collective bargaining, but that they are part of management. This was their decision, not the government's.

In view of that, Mr. Speaker, the employers concerned feel that they have certain rights and they are insisting upon the enforcement of those rights in the courts while on the other hand, the employees are taking another stand, which it is their privilege to do. I certainly do not feel in view of the situation which now exists that the federal government should intervene at this time.

Mr. Douglas: May I ask the minister two supplementary questions. Can he tell the house roughly what percentage of the longshoremen have not been called back? I think the major part of them have not been called back. Second, would it not be possible to appoint a mediator in an endeavour to bring the parties