

Government Orders

I would hope that the Minister of Labour would show that good faith and make those necessary amendments when we get to committee of the whole. It is a way of resolving it. It does not require any more time. There are clauses in the legislation before us that give the mediator-arbitrator 90 days to make his or her decision. The same thing can be done with a three person panel. It is not cumbersome. Yes, it is more difficult in some ways for some individuals. However, it does ensure along with that difficulty that we actually deal with the issues that are there and it gives us a much better chance of providing a long-term solution to some of the problems that exist in Thunder Bay.

I would also like to point that this is not a union that has been on strike each and every year. This is not a union that has required back to work legislation in order to resolve its disputes. For the most part the grain handlers at Thunder Bay have negotiated with their employers and have settled the situation without the need for back to work legislation.

Now that it is before this House I think that it is imperative that the government give the tools to the employers and to the employees to ensure lasting peace at the port in Thunder Bay.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say a few words on this legislation, an act to provide the resumption and continuance of grain handling operations at Thunder Bay. I would like to address it from three aspects; first of all, the seaway itself from the aspect of agriculture and the farmers and third, from the aspect of all Canadians. I had a great deal of sympathy for the hon. member from Thunder Bay. I have sat on the transport committee different times when a great deal of concern was raised about the seaway and grain handling. Anyone who has sat on the transport committee knows the history of that situation.

• (1150)

I believe at one time about 75 per cent of the grain came through the Thunder Bay route and the St. Lawrence Seaway. That has changed drastically. Having

been a farmer on the prairies and living to the east side of Moose Jaw, I know that the cut-off point for the transportation of grain generally speaking has been from Moose Jaw west and from Moose Jaw east through Thunder Bay.

The numbers are dramatic. Also I do not believe he drew attention to it but the price of grain at the port of Vancouver is higher than the price of grain at the port of Thunder Bay. This all comes into play.

It is very important to the St. Lawrence Seaway and to grain handling in Thunder Bay that the movement of grain is continuous and not held up. I think it is in the best interests of the workers there that the grain keeps moving and this continues because there are difficulties that surround the whole movement of grain. I indicated earlier that 75 per cent of the grain used to come out and there were return loads such as steel and other things for the boats coming in. This is very important. We understand that and I certainly heard what the member had to say. However I am pleased to hear that they are going to support this legislation because they realize the impact of the significance of this to a country.

From the aspect of agriculture, we saw in Winnipeg yesterday the very difficult situation that farmers are facing. There is no question about that. It is obvious to this House and to anybody in Canada who is watching the situation what farmers are facing.

I was at Rosetown. The presentations made by farm groups and farmers were very important and made in a direction that was non-political. Yet they said in a very direct way to the people of Canada and to the government that grain handling and the situation of farm income is so important today. No one would argue with that. We are talking about farm income figures at \$6,300 a family farm, which of course is a number that comes from Agriculture Canada. Within hours I think we will hear announcements from the government addressing that situation.

The Prime Minister was in Winnipeg and had a very good meeting with the farm leaders. He indicated very clearly that there would be help coming from the government for the farmers.