

1950  
NEW ZEALAND

---

# STOPPAGE OF WORK ON WATERFRONT

(STATEMENT BY RIGHT HON. S. G. HOLLAND, PRIME MINISTER, RELATIVE TO

---

*Laid on the Table of the House by leave*

---



19th September, 1950.

IN pursuance of my promise that I would keep honourable members of the House informed concerning developments in connection with the stoppage of work on the waterfront, I now have to inform the House that work at all ports has, with the exception of certain perishable cargoes, been brought to a standstill and the country's transport system is virtually paralysed.

The decision of the watersiders to hold up the industry and trade of the country can only be deplored in the strongest terms.

Along with the Minister of Labour, the Hon. W. Sullivan, I have had long discussions with the leaders of the waterside workers. We have done everything in our power to impress upon them the loss, suffering, and inconvenience that are inescapable consequences of their action.

In our meetings with them we have discussed the most minute details of their problems. We have tried to impress upon them that strikes are not a satisfactory or proper method of dealing with disputes and that they cause suffering to hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

We have invited the watersiders to submit proposals for the more satisfactory working of their industry and for the settlement of disputes.

In our August discussions we offered to establish a Royal Commission to inquire into every aspect of their industry. That proposal was whole-heartedly welcomed by the watersiders, who gave their pledge that until the Royal Commission had completed its findings there would be uninterrupted work on the wharves throughout New Zealand.

Immediately the August conference was concluded the Government set about preparations for establishing the Royal Commission, and will be ready this week to announce its personnel and order of reference.

We wrote to all interested parties inviting them to submit their ideas about the matters to be inquired into by the Royal Commission. The last to reply were the watersiders, who gave their views last Thursday.

The present hold-up is in complete breach of their clear undertaking that normal work would proceed pending the Royal Commission's findings.

The issues involved in the present trouble are fundamental and basic—lampblack is only one of many matters in dispute, the real trouble is simply whether disputes are to be settled by lawful constituted authority or by direct action and strikes.

The watersiders themselves asked for the re-establishment of the Waterfront Industry Authority and agreed to abide by its decisions, yet when a decision of the Authority is given with which they disagree they refuse to honour their pledge to abide by its decision and use the strike weapon in what they say is the only means of achieving their ends.

We have invited the watersiders to put forward to the Royal Commission their proposals for running the wharves. We have promised them that the present, and any future, disputes can be considered by the Royal Commission. There is nothing more we can offer them.

It is only a matter of a few weeks ago that they asked for the re-establishment of the Waterfront Industry Authority; now they demand that it should be abolished.

The following is a summary of the situation —

*On January 18, 1950*, the watersiders requested that the Industry Authority be re-established and promised to abide by its decisions.

*On June 2, 1950*, the Authority was re-established as requested, and the watersiders now refuse to accept its decisions and ask for its abolition. They have withdrawn their own representation on the Waterfront Authority, which has the effect of making the Authority inoperative.

*On August 3, 1950*, the watersiders accepted the Government's offer to set up a Royal Commission and promised uninterrupted work on all wharves throughout New Zealand pending the completion of the Royal Commission's findings. To-day there is a general hold-up on the wharves throughout New Zealand.

The Hon. Mr. Sullivan and I have on behalf of the Government, made it clear that we will do anything that will ensure harmony in the industry, but we have been firm and insistent that it is fundamental and basic in the Government's policy that the rule of law must prevail and that observance of the law and compliance with the decisions of lawfully constituted industrial authorities must be observed.

In the opinion of the Government the present hold-up is part and parcel of the "cold war" being waged throughout the world and must be treated on that basis.

The people of New Zealand have a right to look to its constitutionally elected Government to ensure the observance of law and order and the peaceful carrying on of the wharves and the supply to the people of the necessities of life.

The Government is determined to discharge that obligation fearlessly and firmly.

This morning I invited representatives of the strikers to discuss the present position with the Minister of Labour and myself.

At that meeting I informed those present that the Government takes the most serious view of the situation and had decided that unless normal work is resumed on all waterfronts to-morrow morning the Government will, to-morrow, under the provisions of the Public Safety Conservation Act, declare a state of emergency to exist.

At 2.30 p.m. to-morrow the Government will introduce a resolution into the House asking Parliament to endorse its action. At the same time detailed information of the various powers the Government will take to deal with the situation will be laid before Parliament.

The Government is determined that the full force of the State, and all the resources at its disposal, will be brought to bear in dealing with the situation.

I wish most earnestly to appeal to all people to exercise calm in this grave crisis, and I appeal with equal earnestness to the watersiders and any others who may support them to most carefully consider the disastrous consequences of their action and the effect it will have on hundreds of thousands of innocent working people who are bound to suffer heavily unless the present trouble is settled and normal work resumed.

The Government and the leaders of the workers affected have had many conferences. There has been no conflict between the Government and the workers, who must realize that no self-respecting Government can allow this country to be paralysed.

I sincerely hope that the course of action I have indicated will not be necessary and that commonsense will yet prevail.

*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, not given      printing (1,000 copies), £6 10s.

---

By Authority: R. E. OWEN, Government Printer, Wellington.—1950.

*Price 3d.*]