

*Industrial Relations Act*

which I still hold but not in any feeling of bitterness, that one of the contributing factors to his death at the age of 56 after serving 42 years with the railway was the very dictatorial manner in which we were transferred from Quebec to Montreal.

This took place 25 years ago. I like to think we have come a long way from that very bleak day in my life. I am not so sure, of course, that we have. I remained active in the labour movement of Canadian National for many years, as recently as 1952. Like the hon. member for Nickel Belt, I hold that the Freedman report is one of the most progressive reports that has ever been brought before the labour movement in Canada. I feel that in time the impact of the Freedman report will be as great or even greater than the report made by another courageous man not so many years ago, Mr. Justice Rand.

I am very happy, Mr. Speaker, and I should like to say this before my time runs out, to be attached to the Department of Labour and to serve under a minister who has on several occasions openly stated his respect and admiration for the Freedman report. I say this not because the minister is here. If he did not share this point of view I would not want to be his parliamentary secretary. He knows I am independent enough to resign if at any time I felt he was not working in the best interests of labour.

Those of you who had the privilege of listening to the presentation of the annual brief from the Canadian Labour Congress will realize that a certain portion of the brief was based upon recommendations in the Freedman report. I do not want to read too extensively from the contribution of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) when he replied to the brief, but I quote briefly from a transcript of the proceedings:

In the same connection might I refer to two other things. The first is your reference to the Freedman report, which I think is an admirable thought-provoking document. Some people criticize it as having gone too far beyond the terms of reference, but I must say I think the commissioner, Mr. Justice Freedman, is to be commended for having brought this problem so much into the open. It has brought it into the light, and it is something that I know my colleagues in government and the officials of my department and the manpower department are all studying very carefully.

In that Mr. Justice Freedman says that the most important thing and the first step should be for the employees concerned and the management of the railway concerned to get together and see if they cannot find, and bring about a solution; I am happy to tell you that, having had meetings with representatives of the railway union—some of whom are

here today—and with representatives of management of the railway, encouraging steps are already being taken along that line.

Addressing the Canadian Labour Congress manpower training conference in Ottawa on Wednesday, February 23, 1966, the minister also said:

During the past few years we have seen some very unfortunate examples of what can happen when technology and automation are allowed to progress faster than the human element can keep pace. We have also seen what can happen when technological decisions are made without due consideration for all those people about to be or who think they might be affected. Not only is there likely to be some hardship for those immediately involved, but like the proverbial pebble in a pool, waves of worry and apprehension ripple across the entire community, the entire district, the entire country.

In his speech the minister also talked about co-operation and said:

Such co-operation, in my opinion, involves sitting down with someone else, with the desire and sincere intention to work out your mutual problems together. It is the principle of fully and frankly exchanging ideas on subjects which were once considered outside the realms of joint discussions.

● (5:40 p.m.)

I think, Mr. Speaker, the minister made two very important points. First, he stressed in his remarks the very strong impact of these decisions on any community which depends upon railways for its existence. He was talking in a much broader sense and of the very fact that we had no alternative in this country but to introduce, through legislation or by other means, complete co-operation between labour and management. The day has come, if we are to maintain our competitive place in a free society, when management and labour in this country must co-operate before and not after decisions are taken.

Unlike the experience I had 25 years ago, the day has long passed when the voice of labour must be considered as something to be heard after decisions are taken. It is to the disadvantage of management, employers, industries and of Canada that far reaching decisions affecting the lives, the wages and the future of Canadians from the labour class are reached by an autocratic body making a unilateral decision without prior consultation.

I think the present Minister of Labour, with the vast experience he has had in the executive field with Polymer and other corporations, understands this fact, and I am proud that he has said so quite openly in public. I have read into his remarks—I am sure I am reading properly—an indication on