

end before it spreads to unmanageable proportions in Canada.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Verdun): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of attention to the three gentlemen from Vancouver as they walked a tightrope. They included my good friend in the NDP. I can understand his dilemma more than the dilemma of the other two hon. gentlemen because of his labour background and orientation. That was probably the reason his speech was so wishy-washy.

I remember a few years ago when we had a famous bill known as C-186 in this House. That was a moment of truth for the House of Commons. I wish all these eloquent spokesmen had been around in those days. I opposed Bill C-186, Mr. Speaker. I think these hon. gentlemen would have done the same. But for newcomers here, may I say that Bill C-186 was simply a concept advanced by certain regions of this nation that, in a country this big, national bargaining units were not reasonable, not logical and that other things should be taken into consideration such as were advanced this evening, regional pay rates, the culture of an area, the language and the virtual impossibility of a Quebec-based union infiltrating a national bargaining unit. I supported the national bargaining concept, and still do, because if we were to have regional bargaining in this country some area of the transportation industry would be on strike all the time.

The fundamental point here is not whether there is justice or injustice done to the striking firemen. On the surface there seems to be a very solid, basic case that somewhere along the line the firemen's wage rate has fallen behind what seems to be a decent wage rate for firemen in B.C. The answer is not to pull down the British Columbia rate to the level of the Newfoundland rate but to bring the Newfoundland rate up to the British Columbia rate. But having said that, Mr. Speaker, that is a point that you must argue within the laws, of the country, and the legalities of our country are very clear.

We have a national bargaining unit across the country associated with the Public Service Alliance that speaks on behalf of these firemen in British Columbia. Really, what I think hon. members are asking the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) to do, as a tribute to his well known knowledge of labour and not necessarily because he is Minister of Transport, is to intervene in a dispute in which under the law he has no right to direct participation. By law the employer is designated as Treasury Board. By law the representative of those 200 firemen is the Public Service Alliance, and any direct infringement on that relationship by the Minister of Transport, by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) or any other minister other than the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) is a direct contradiction of the law of the land.

If the law is wrong, change the law. If the 200 firemen do not have faith in the ability of the Public Service Alliance to sell the concept to Treasury Board that wages offered are unrealistic, they have a legal obligation to take up their grievance within the Public Service Alliance at the first possible opportunity and to say, "We are not being adequately represented by the bargaining organization for which we voted." Mr. Speaker, we are not doing a favour to the workers, to the firemen or to the labour movement in this country to suggest any other procedure

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such as those I have heard suggested by members of the opposition tonight, including the member of the NDP.

Really what they are saying, for the sake of expediency, because they are B.C. members—I would probably act the same way—is that here they have 200 friends who have a case. There is an obvious injustice because they are underpaid in relation to other firemen in B.C. Although the hon. gentleman made a very eloquent plea, really what he was advocating was that they ignore the law of the land, because the law of the land says that regardless of this injustice the solution is not to strike illegally.

It always seems to me very paradoxical that opposition members will holler about the SIU wanting to go on strike weeks before such a strike occurs because this will affect the grain trade, but at the same time they will endorse an illegal strike at Vancouver airport because there is an obvious injustice in the rate of wages. Did it ever occur to them that there would be an obvious injustice in the wage pattern of the SIU when they decide to go on strike? Wasn't there an obvious injustice—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay) rises on a point of order.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey), but I do not think he really meant to say that the opposition endorses this illegal strike. I think our spokesman made that very clear. I would ask him to withdraw that remark.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): This is hardly a point of order. The hon. member may suggest that the hon. member's remarks do not correspond with what might have been said in the House, but the Chair cannot go so far as to ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to withdrawing my remark. The hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) made it clear that he did not endorse an illegal strike, but he did not tell me that he was the official spokesman for his party; and the other hon. gentleman had another view.

● (2150)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. Does the hon. member wish to ask a question?

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question? I do not ask this question in any antagonistic sense, but what is the difference between the minister sending two of his officials out to settle this strike and going out himself?

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, there is a very fundamental difference. The minister did not send two officials out to settle the strike; he sent two officials out to reason with the men, to get them back to work and then settle in a perfectly legal manner. That is the difference. The proper way is to settle around the bargaining table and to obey the law of the land as it is written at the moment. If that law is wrong, we can amend it; but the law says: You cannot strike legally. Like it or not, that is the law of the land.