

Air Traffic Control Dispute

try to take this into account. I must say that when some degree of leniency has been exercised by the Chair in this way it is always a little easier, I feel, to rule against the hon. member who has made the motion. This is why, in general, I have tried in a very sincere way to exercise some leniency in judging the extent to which hon. members respect the limitations placed on them by the rules and by our practice. I know the right hon. gentleman will wish to take that into account.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is what I have been doing. Had it not been for the usual repetitious interference by the hon. gentleman, I would have ended my argument long ago.

I do suggest, sir, that if ever there was a case of urgency, this is one. This house will not permit itself, if I sense the feeling of this chamber, to become the agency of the government in a matter as urgent as this is.

This house, if I have the feeling of the chamber, is not going to permit itself, on a matter as urgent as this because of the danger to the Canadian people and the economy, to be used as an instrument of intimidation against the air controllers. Yesterday Your Honour said, "Well, wait until tomorrow; there are discussions going on." How long are we to be denied?

Each day the minister can get up and say "It is not urgent today, the strike is not going to be until next Tuesday," while at the same time placing on the order paper an extension of the time for the house to sit, and also to sit on Saturday. In other words, nothing can be more urgent, otherwise the government would not have been impelled to place these extraordinary measures in anticipation before the House of Commons.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I shall not detain the house long. It does seem to me, sir, that the very fact my hon. friend, the President of the Treasury Board, has given notice of the resolution, which he gave at 2.30, is an indication that the government, if this matter does reach that degree of urgency that will require parliamentary action, has already taken the necessary steps to provide an opportunity for the debate.

In the circumstances I suggest, sir, that since the government of its own motion has taken the necessary steps to provide an opportunity for debate, we should not set aside the urgent business which my hon. friend, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr.

MacEachen), has before the house at the present time in order to carry on a debate concurrently with negotiations which, as I said yesterday, cannot be very effectively carried on if the government's capacity in regard to negotiations is nullified by the necessity of making public statements about those negotiations while they are being conducted.

● (4:00 p.m.)

There will be that opportunity for debate, unless the matter is settled, in which case I would be quite happy to see the house use its privileges as much as it likes.

Mr. Nielsen: Would the minister answer a question?

Mr. Pickersgill: I suggest, sir, that until there has been an opportunity to see whether this accommodation can be reached, it would not be in the public interest to have a debate. I suggest, sir, that the urgency of debate does not exist because an opportunity will be provided for debate.

Mr. Nielsen: Will the minister answer a question?

Mr. Pickersgill: Certainly.

Mr. Nielsen: If the government does not consider the matter urgent, will the minister tell us why it is giving notice on the order paper for this legislation? If it is not urgent, why introduce the legislation?

Mr. Pickersgill: I consider the matter of the greatest possible urgency. I said so yesterday, but I do not consider it a matter that urgently requires to be debated within the narrow terms of our rules. In my opinion, which obviously isn't shared by all hon. members, while these negotiations are going on this afternoon in another place it would not be in the public interest to have a public, acrimonious debate here.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi rising to ask a question?

Mr. Grafftey: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I desire to make only one point, and that is to refer Your Honour to the fact that yesterday, as recorded at page 11048 of *Hansard*, you rejected a similar motion by the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr), and in these words:

The question proposed by the hon. member for Ontario is based, by his own admission, on an assumption.