

Maintenance of Railway Operation Act

whole house. I have therefore had my motion redrafted so as to apply only to consideration of this bill dealing with the interruption of railway services, leaving any other commitments that we may wish to ask hon. members to make until that bill has been disposed of and they have had time to consider what they would feel it to be in the public interest then to do.

With respect to the procedure this evening, this is an extraordinary bill, and it is being introduced in the name of the Prime Minister; but it is, after all, a bill which normally, under other conditions, would come from the Department of Labour. Without wishing to create any precedent which would affect the order of debate, I suggest, if it be agreeable to the leader of the opposition, who traditionally has the right to be recognized immediately after the statement of the sponsor of a government measure, that I myself do not attempt to make the whole presentation but that I deal with a certain part of it and that I be followed by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg), who will give the house an objective account of the events which have led up to this situation which gives us all so much concern. If that is agreeable then the motion for the second reading of the bill will be submitted in my name, but the Minister of Labour will be given the opportunity of completing the statement in support of the motion before anyone else asks to be recognized by His Honour. I am sure that will take some substantial time this evening. If after that is done it is felt by the leader of the opposition or by others that it would not be expediting matters to proceed any further before they have had time to give closer study to the actual terms of the legislation, I shall be prepared to submit a motion for adjournment until tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock, when I hope we may get into the heart of the matter and give it the consideration which its importance and its urgency require.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the proposal just made by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) is entirely acceptable to me. In view of the fact that the bill in printed form will not be available for distribution until eight o'clock this evening, it is highly desirable that there be an opportunity for hon. members to examine the bill, and that there be an explanation by the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg), before hon. members are called upon to express an opinion upon the bill itself. Therefore to accept the suggestion that the usual procedure be varied—that the Prime Minister introduce the bill and make such comments upon it as he deems appropriate,

and that the Minister of Labour follow with the explanation on behalf of his department—would greatly expedite the business; and an adjournment may follow so that all of us may consider the bill in the light of the information so presented to the house.

Mr. Angus MacInnis (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that a bill having to do with a very important matter, one that has affected the lives of the people of Canada for the last week, should not be before us until fifteen minutes before we are to begin to discuss it. Surely the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) should have been better prepared in coming before the house with this bill. If he wants to see the bill dealt with expeditiously, we should have at least an hour, from eight o'clock to nine, to go over the bill. So far as I am concerned, I am prepared to agree that we sit continuously until the bill is passed; but we should not be asked to come into the house with just fifteen minutes to examine one of the most important pieces of legislation that has come before this house for many years.

Mr. St. Laurent: Mr. Speaker, if the views of the hon. member, whose interest I can quite appreciate, are shared by any substantial number of hon. members, I would not have the slightest objection to waiting until nine o'clock before Your Honour takes the chair after dinner.

Some hon. Members: No.

Some hon. Members: Eight o'clock.

Mr. Coldwell: If we defer the sitting until nine o'clock, could we not sit continuously until we have disposed of the bill? Every hour is important in bringing about the resumption of railway traffic.

Mr. Solon E. Low (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, the procedure outlined by the Prime Minister is perfectly satisfactory to the group I represent. We have met primarily to deal with a very serious crisis occasioned by the railway strike. Every minute counts, and we are prepared to give the government our time as continuously as may be necessary to dispose of the bill and get the railways working at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Drew: Since it was suggested that I consent to the variation of the ordinary procedure under which I would have followed in the debate tonight, I would point out that every minute is important; every minute is of urgent consideration. It is also of the utmost importance that as the representatives of the people of Canada we know what we are dealing with, and the best way for us to know what we are dealing with is to have the bill presented, an explanation given by