

*Legislation Respecting Railway Matters*

that far, to take a decision? Can they postpone it for two years? Can they let the matter drag on for three years? Well, if the government can give me some assurance as to the wording, I cannot find any provision requiring the arbitrators to make a decision in a given time. I would appreciate it very much if a time limit were set for the arbitrators to hold their discussions and submit their report.

Also, the arbitrators should have the legal and financial capacity and secure advisers. Of course, it will perhaps be pointed out to me that this is not authorized by all the acts referred to in this piece of legislation. If it is impossible to proceed directly, indirect means should be sought. Three arbitrators could be appointed but it could happen that only one who would know all about transportation matters; but, not being an actuary, perhaps he would not be able to work out the calculations. He could have the legal and financial capacity of an actuary who could figure out the total cost of granting such a salary increase or of bringing about such and such results within the Canadian economy.

**Mr. Ovide Laflamme (Québec-Montmorency):** Mr. Speaker, I only wish to take a few minutes to give the impressions which I was able to gather from the strikers in my riding during an informative meeting I held last night, and also to make a few remarks which I think appropriate concerning the bill now under consideration in this house.

On the one hand, the general impression I got from the strikers I met convinced me beyond doubt that they had no understanding whatsoever of the meaning of the bill under consideration, because they believed that it actually dealt with the salaries of the railway workers.

In my opinion, this bill—and I believe the salary question is a minor one—deals with only two essential and important points. First, the return to work of the railwaymen, because the strike must end at all costs; second, the resumption of negotiations through a process established in the bill. Thus, the government, in settling the problem of the strike which, of course, must end, was anxious to protect, in spite of everyone and even, I submit, against some members of the opposition and especially the N.D.P., the freedom of collective bargaining, even in the field of the public service. On that point, I believe that all Canadian workers presently on strike must understand me.

[Mr. Allard.]

At the present time the Canadian government has taken care to protect the freedom of collective bargaining, even in the field of public service and railway transportation. Negotiations, of course, provide for a return to work, a sort of sit-down strike, and a salary increase which seems small; however, I believe this is not very important at present since, under this bill, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) will appoint a mediator who will report before two months and a half have elapsed; and consequently, if we are not here, and so that the problem does not have to be brought before parliament, there is a provision for compulsory arbitration because the situation naturally has to come to an end. And even then, the present government, which seeks to respect the freedom of negotiations and, in the public field, the freedom of debate, provides that ten members of parliament may, at the time the arbitrators' decision is handed down, raise the question again in the house to criticize or stress the weaknesses of the decision or, finally, to voice the feelings of workers who could be dissatisfied with the conditions imposed in the decision.

But, Mr. Speaker, I really wonder if the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) has, in his own way, solved the problem this afternoon. He told the government: Your bill is worth nothing. Send it back and introduce another one. What does it mean on the part of the Leader of the Opposition? What have we got in the way of constructive criticism in such an important situation? I respectfully submit that we have absolutely nothing.

As far as the suggestions made by the N.P.D. are concerned, there is opposition to compulsory arbitration. If there is an area in which I think one can logically conceive compulsory arbitration, it is the area of railway transport, where the rates are determined by a government control board called the Board of Transport Commissioners.

And in the case of compulsory arbitration, the government with logic, has upheld the freedom of speech by allowing ten members to rise and the debate to resume and amendments to be moved by the house. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this does not create any difficulty and I sincerely think, because I have spent part of the evening with strikers, that this bill, being logically and objectively set out, seeks to guarantee in the first place the respect of the right to strike, which is a sacred right of the workers, even in the public sector—as I respectfully submit—and