

### *Railway Operations Act*

wage of non-operating railway workers is \$3.54 per hour. That is \$141.60 per week, with a take-home pay in the neighbourhood of \$100 per week for the employee. Some take home a little more and some take home a little less. But you do not need a BA, an MA or a PhD to know that workers who have families to support cannot make ends meet on the wages they are presently receiving. We must remember that \$3.54 per hour is the average. Some of the employees work at rates of pay as low as \$2.32 an hour. The welders, steel bridge gangs and bridge tenders work for around \$4 per hour. If the non-operating workers are so essential, surely they should be compensated for their labours.

● (1740)

As an arbitrator, I would also remember that members of these unions also form part of the general public and the public interest, a phrase members of the opposition parties have bandied about. They are taxpayers, and also heavy consumers. We must never fail to remind ourselves that in our society today, as always, it is the working person whose purchases make the wheels of industry turn in this country. Thus, the money spent by millions of workers filters down to the transportation industry through the hauling of goods that these workers help to produce.

Given the state of affairs I have outlined, if I were an arbitrator I would certainly look favourably upon increasing the men's salaries above that which is being sought as a floor in this bill. However, in saying that I must repeat my earlier comment that I strongly believe the temporary measures and the minimum increase in retroactive pay placed before this parliament represent a fair process through which the railway workers can get a better deal.

In arriving at an exact figure as to what wages should be, definite consideration must be given to the industrial inquiry commission's report on the exact cost of the pension package. The arbitrator will also have to take into account increases in the cost of living. This is how I would act if I were an arbitrator and this dispute were put before me.

I should like to make one point perfectly clear at this time. I feel the bill before us is the tool by which a fair and just settlement can be reached. This bill should facilitate a settlement which is just and fair for the worker. Strikes are not the answer to labour disputes. Both sides, labour and management, in addition to the general public, suffer. If we can send men to the moon, surely we have men in this democratic society of ours who can sit down and come up with an idea that is fair and just to both sides to a labour dispute, so that we can eliminate the problems facing the most precious and valuable asset this country has—its working people.

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Chairman, I will be brief. I had hoped the Minister of Labour would be in the chamber at this time as I should like to ask him a question. As he is not here, I will address it to his parliamentary secretary. Before coming to the question I should like to say that, speaking on behalf of the non-operating workers in the area of my home in British Columbia, there is no question whatsoever that these workers are badly behind in terms

[Mr. Turner (London East).]

of wages paid to people performing the same kind of work outside the railway trades.

I will give some examples because the disparity may be greater for those people in British Columbia than in other parts of the country, and I recognize the arguments used that wage settlements have to be on a national scale and applied equally everywhere. All hon. members ought to realize, when considering this question, that there are regional disparities and that an award that may be sufficient in one area is not necessarily sufficient in a high-cost area. This is a problem somebody will have to look at. I hope the minister will do so because I think it will recur.

At the moment, in Vancouver a man working for CP Transport as a warehouseman gets \$3.50 an hour, but outside the railway trades a man doing exactly the same job gets \$5.05 an hour. A warehouseman-tractor driver for CP Transport gets \$3.54, but a man outside the railway trades gets \$5.15 an hour. A rate clerk gets \$3.69 an hour, but outside the railway trades he gets \$4.95 an hour. A CP switchboard operator gets \$3.15 an hour, and outside he gets \$4.33. If there is a member in the House who does not see that these people have fallen a long way behind, he should see me after my speech and I will give him the rest of the list. They are behind, and something must be done.

The second thing I want to say is this. I hope all hon. members will support the amendments put forward by this party, and I hope all the people who are presently on strike will recognize that this bill, if these amendments are adopted, will at least provide a decent base upon which to continue negotiations. The amendments to be proposed by this party will ensure that negotiations cannot drag on indefinitely.

The Minister of Labour in his statement yesterday referred to the establishment of an inquiry into railway pension plans. As some hon. members know, pension plans in the railway industry have been for a long time, and still are, causing great concern to workers in the industry. Also some hon. members know, an association has been established called the Canadian Railways Employees Pension Association, the purpose of which has been to bring the pension matter to the attention of the public, to the Department of Labour and, I am sorry to say, the leaders and the members of the unions within the railway trades. The Minister of Labour said:

—I intend to appoint an industrial inquiry commission... to estimate the cost of the negotiated settlement relating to pensions, and comment on any differences between his cost-estimate and that of the railway companies.

Earlier this afternoon the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre asked the Minister of Labour whether this inquiry would consider the total pension problem within the railways. I am happy to see that the Minister of Labour is now in the chamber. As I understood the minister's answer this afternoon, he suggested he would be willing to have his appointee look at more than just the question of whether the estimate of cost as put out in negotiations to date is necessarily accurate. In this regard I want to bring to the attention of the minister the fact that as recently as last July 27, in a publication put out by the British Columbia branch of the Canadian Railways Employees Pension Association, the position of this associ-