

Legislation Respecting Railway Matters

are to continue do not come to a satisfactory conclusion. Let us leave it at that and deal with this legislation.

• (6:50 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. J.-A. Mongrain (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, with regard to Bill C-230, to which the Conservative party has seen fit to move an amendment, I would like to say a few words.

When I was called back here, Mr. Speaker, like all other members of this house, I came to Ottawa with a feeling of increased responsibility because we were faced with an emergency. In the first few minutes of yesterday afternoon's sitting, I think I noticed in most of my colleagues that feeling which made the atmosphere a little dramatic and I was very happy to hear, in the first remarks made, that desire of most of the leaders of the various parties, the various groups in this house, to do the impossible to expedite the settlement of that strike which is so costly for the Canadian economy.

And I naïvely thought—I confess that I have learned something and I still have much to learn—that with all that goodwill, the strike would be settled within 24 hours after which we would set ourselves to modernize the railway act, to deal with the increase in the cost of living and to provide for all the other urgent needs of Canada.

But in the course of the afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I had to sing a different tune when I saw the leader of the N.D.P. (Mr. Douglas) for instance ask for the adjournment until this afternoon, a proposal that seemed totally illogical to me but which could be explained by the fact that N.D.P. members had to hear their master's voice, the financial backer, in the circumstances.

In my opinion, in the face of such an urgent problem, our masters, the masters of members of parliament, are all the citizens of Canada. There are 20 million Canadian citizens who expect us to settle as soon as possible this strike which proves disastrous for our economy. Consequently, every hour counts.

Last night I was also surprised to see that the Leader of the Opposition refused to carry on with his remarks. There may have been extenuating circumstances in his case. I think I noticed that he remained late in his office last night. Perhaps he wanted to examine a little more thoroughly the implications of this bill. It may also be that he wanted to go

[Mr. Thompson.]

through the newspaper headlines this morning, for he likes to try the government with editorials from various papers. However, I do not believe that our editorial writers, though I respect them, are endowed with infallibility or have been entrusted with the administration of the country.

I believe this matter is in the hands of the government, and if the government fails, then the electors will have their say at the next election.

Mr. Speaker, these dilatory measures, this waste of time, while workers are forced to remain idle and suffer all kinds of hardships—indeed some railway strikers will not get this week's salary which they badly need—was a shock to me. I was scandalized to see that some members wished to hold up the debate for all kinds of reasons which do not appear to be very serious.

And I would like to add this, Mr. Speaker. I am making these remarks while fully conscious that I represent a working man's constituency, one of the larger labour ridings, and at least until the next election—one of the largest working class constituencies in Canada. I am also fully conscious of the fact that the workers gave me their support at the last election. We have some six or seven thousand workers, members of labour or trade unions; they did not vote for the N.D.P., but for the independent candidate.

So, I believe it is my duty to speak on their behalf. I think I know them because I have been associated with them for the past 20 years and I would like it to be borne in mind that I shall make these few remarks in the light of this awareness of my responsibility toward my workers. I shall be brief.

Mr. Speaker, I am not one of those who wish to defend representatives of the railways. Like many others, like most of the members in this house, I have witnessed their arrogance and greed, sanctioned by the government, through which they have milked every last cent and through which they want to keep for themselves whatever is paying without giving the Canadian people services equal to those they have received from them. I know that. But I do not think this is the time to discuss that question. We shall have the opportunity of discussing it in detail when we consider the second bill and I shall make it my duty to support any member of this house who seeks to criticize the railways fairly and rightly for their deficiencies.

I am one of those who know that a great number of railway workers are not treated