

Airline Firefighters Strike

The supervisory personnel are all extremely well qualified individuals with years of experience in airport emergency operations and firefighting techniques—

What a farce to perpetrate on this House tonight! The officials of the Ministry of Transport went out there to set up this arrangement and to break the strike—the very thing which the minister has accused us of trying to do.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Oberle: This is what happened in Vancouver: the officials went out there and arranged with management personnel to break the strike behind the back of the Public Service Alliance. That is exactly what has happened; and this action was taken before these people met the workers on strike at Vancouver. It happened before eight o'clock, and the meetings did not start until eight. This is exactly how this must be interpreted and I take strong objection to it.

Let us take a look at the situation as it exists. There are three parties involved in this dispute. There are the dissident members of the union who demand recognition of their regional plight. The hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) and the spokesman for the NDP in this debate have adequately described the situation. Then there is the Public Service Alliance, the union to which these members belong. They have a job to do to ensure that their members are treated equally throughout this land. Theirs is a very difficult situation. Then there is the government which says that it cannot become involved in the internal workings of the union, that it has no responsibility to the people on strike in Vancouver who cannot make ends meet and who cannot keep up with the Joneses because they make \$3,000 a year less than workers who come under the municipal and provincial governments.

I challenge the Minister of Transport, who has left the House; he cannot stand the truth.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Oberle: He cannot react to anything but a crisis. The minister does not know how to forecast or plan. He himself admitted in the House and to the press that there is no transportation policy in this country. He knows only how to react to a crisis and an emergency situation. This is the same kind of situation as the one that existed when we adjourned last year for a summer recess and then had to return to settle the CNR strike. It is the same situation that prompted us to threaten him with a postponement of the spring recess because of the boxcar situation. I see another minister opposite making derogatory signs at me. It is easy for him to do that: it makes a lot of sense and solves many problems!

We want the minister to do what the hon. member for Vancouver South suggested. Let him apply a practical mind to finding a solution. I would phone the Public Service Alliance and say, "Look, you put me in an embarrassing situation because members of the opposition are crying for action. You and I should go out to Vancouver and discuss the problems with these people." Members from Vancouver have said that they would be ready to have a truck standing by awaiting the arrival of the minister, they would sit down and discuss the problem with him at a moment's notice and they would put the

[Mr. Oberle.]

airport back into operation, not only the airport at Vancouver but every other airport in British Columbia.

This strike will spread and the problem has been recognized. On March 25, 1974, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) said, when he spoke about this very problem not only with the employees of CNR and Air Canada but with all employees under federal jurisdiction who are members of the Public Service Alliance:

In the case of regional pay policy, the government for years has taken the position that it will not be a leader in matters of pay and salary but will follow the pattern set by what is generally known in this country as the private sector.

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We are not talking here about the private sector; we are talking about the public sector, about the employees of municipalities and provincial governments. He says that given the choice of trying to equate the pay of the public service to that of the private sector, on a national level or on a regional level, for common sense reasons the government must use the regional basis. The President of the Treasury Board has admitted this. He has announced it as government policy. But the Minister of Transport refuses to recognize that there are serious problems being experienced by employees in western Canada who find it very difficult to understand why their neighbours make \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year more than they do, performing the same job and having had less training than they are called to undertake in the interests of public safety. Yet the minister refuses to act. He swept out of the house. This Press release will not get him off the hook.

I will find it very difficult tomorrow night to leave here and arrive at Vancouver airport in a DOT aircraft. Those fellows are going to say, "Oh, you are taking an Easter recess. Where are you going on your holiday?" I will be interested to see how hon. members to my left answer that question.

Mr. Rose: I am not taking a holiday.

Mr. Oberle: If you are interested in staying here, so am I. This is a very serious problem and other members of my party feel the same way. Of course, hon. members to my left will also have a difficult time when they read some of the comments made by the Premier of British Columbia who has called upon them to resign from their party if they cannot go along with his suggestion that the federal sales tax be removed. I expect the resignation of at least six members of the NDP next week, and I am willing to stay around for that because it would really be a bright day in the life of this parliament.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has circulated a pamphlet entitled "Throne Speech, 1974." In it we find these words:

Those Canadians least able to protect themselves have a right to be protected from the consequences of events over which they have no control and from intimidation from big business, big labour or big government.

There are 210 firemen in the province of British Columbia who have a right to protection from the federal government. The government has to intervene there. It has to call the three parties together and bring the strike to an