

CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

Thursday, October 18, 1945.

The house met at three o'clock.

RAILWAYS AND SHIPPING

CONCURRENCE IN FIRST REPORT

Mr. RALPH MAYBANK (Winnipeg South Centre) presented the first report of the standing committee on railways and shipping owned, operated and controlled by the government, and moved that the report be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

LABOUR CONDITIONS

STRIKE AT FORD MOTOR PLANT, WINDSOR

Hon. HUMPHREY MITCHELL (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I said in Toronto yesterday at the conclusion of the conference which I called in an attempt to settle the Ford strike, that any statement I had to make regarding the situation would be made in this house.

In every industrial dispute, it is important that public statements on the part of all concerned should be factual and not provocative, and that hasty judgments be avoided. I thought it desirable, therefore, that my first statement with respect to our efforts at the conference, and the attitude of the parties towards them, should await to-day's sitting of this house.

I recall to the house the first statement I made on this strike. I then pointed out that the dispute between the union and the company over the terms of a new collective agreement dated back to April, 1944, and that relations between them prior to that time had not been good.

I placed on the record a brief review of the several attempts which had been made by the departments of labour of the dominion and the province of Ontario to resolve the dispute. These included prolonged efforts by members of the wartime labour relations board (national) acting as a conciliation tribunal, those of Mr. Justice S. E. Richards, Winnipeg, acting as an industrial disputes inquiry com-

missioner, over a lengthy period, and finally those of the board of conciliation headed by Mr. Justice G. B. O'Connor of Edmonton.

Mr. Justice Richards, in making his report to me as commissioner, referred to the deep-seated antagonisms which he found in the attitudes of the parties towards each other. He said:

There is bad feeling between the parties, which has arisen without good reason. . . . I believe the bad feeling between the parties and the lack of good will and cooperation which should exist in the interests of both parties and for the public good, are such that the parties will not approach each other at the present time in the spirit of compromise which is necessary for the negotiation of a collective agreement. . . .

The board of conciliation which reported to me subsequently on this dispute, corroborated Mr. Justice Richards' view, when it said that:

There has been considerable difficulty between the parties ever since the first contract was signed between the company and the union in January, 1942.

When, last week I decided in consultation with the appropriate minister and officials of the provincial department of labour for Ontario, to call company and union officials into conference in Toronto on Monday of this week, it was thought that there was a possibility of getting both sides to take a more cooperative attitude and of reaching a settlement based on a compromise of their respective positions.

As I intimated earlier to the house, the issues of union shop and check-off are paramount in this dispute. Let it be clearly understood that there is no question on either side of the right of men and women in the industry to belong to the union. That is not the issue in dispute. The issue in dispute is the question, as I have just indicated, of a union shop and check-off. This is what the board of conciliation said:

The issues of union shop and check-off, in our opinion, are at the root of all difficulties between the company and the union. The union insists upon the inclusion of both these provisions. The company, on the other hand, is fully determined that it shall not be a condition