

we give them should be accompanied by a guarantee over the lifetime of the contract so that at the end of 1974 their standard of living will be maintained. I am sure this would be salve to my conscience as well as to the consciences of the people of Canada.

The people of Canada are not opposed to the railway workers getting a fair deal. What they are opposed to is the inconvenience they have been put to in relation to the operation of our national transportation system. I am sure they find no satisfaction in the fact that this government has had to recall parliament to ask for a piece of back-to-work legislation which provides only the minimum sought by the workers when they prepared their proposals probably 18 months ago.

I suggest that if parliament wants to be fair to the Canadian public it will accept the responsibility of putting these men back to work on the terms we propose in respect of wages, with a guarantee that their standard of living will be maintained to the end of 1974. The only way that can be done is including an escalation clause based on the cost of living, and I am prepared to move such an amendment.

Within 10 or 15 years in my area we have lost 1,000 of 2,500 employees of the railway, and seniority is now a major issue. These men want to be sure of their jobs. I do not think this is a matter that should be left to compulsory mediation or arbitration. I believe we should solve this problem.

I am prepared to say that for humanitarian reasons, if for no other, there should be two men in the caboose.

An hon. Member: Oh, come on!

Mr. Peters: I presume the hon. member disagrees. I can remember when trains only had 40 or 50 cars, but now trains have as many as 80 or 90 cars. These trains operate with as many as four units. They are being operated with one engineer, probably one fireman and a head-end brakeman. They have one guy in the caboose. The railways now want to get rid of another man on each of these trains. I suggest for humanitarian reasons there should be two in the caboose, because that guy a mile back has to stay there for seven or eight hours.

An hon. Member: Give him a tape recorder.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, I hope the railroaders hear these remarks and realize how much sympathy they will get for their solitude from members of the Conservative party, who probably now feel there are too many people in the caboose. I suggest they are discounting the safety factor. The best they can do is suggest we give that man in the caboose a tape recorder.

An hon. Member: Let's settle the strike.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Get out of the caboose.

Mr. Peters: These men in the caboose will get little comfort from a tape recorder. An hon. member suggests that we should settle this strike at any price. He reminds me of Chamberlain who said: "Peace at any price". An

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hon. member wants peace at this time at any price so he can go home, but I suggest this is too important a problem. Parliament should not pit constituents across Canada against workers employed in this industry. We must not only be fair, we must appear to be fair. In fact, we must be more than fair.

We have a responsibility to solve these problems which face the railroad worker, one of them being this matter of seniority, and another relating to the number of men in each train crew. A great many non-operating employees have lost their jobs through attrition. In my area I suggest this would be four out of five, and I am sure that is the situation in many other parts of rural Canada. I think this reduction of crew through attrition has reached the point where safety becomes an important factor, particularly if there is to be any further reduction in this area. Members of parliament should be better informed before making decisions in relation to the curtailment of railway staff. This is not the time to make such a decision.

This government has not placed the CNR annual report before parliament for consideration. I suggest that until the Minister of Finance gets off his fanny and appoints some new auditors, and places an audited statement before parliament, we will not get around to discussing these problems. Such a consideration might have been of assistance to the railways and the workers in this situation. I will not be satisfied with this legislation until we provide a guarantee to the workers that they will be no worse off in 1974 than they are after we pass this bill. As it stands now we will have implemented a contract by law, and will have taken from these workers their process of labour negotiation. Any settlement less than what I suggest would represent a shirking of our duty to those constituents we represent across Canada.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

On Clause 4: *Railway services to be resumed.*

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak briefly in respect of Clause 4 as it has a specific application and concern to those who represent the two island provinces on the east coast of Canada.

I was very delighted when the Prime Minister, making his speech to the nation earlier this week, referred specifically to the extreme transportation difficulties faced by Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. I was somewhat less delighted when the Minister of Labour in making his opening remarks in this debate yesterday did not make reference to the particular difficulties created in those two provinces.

Earlier today one of my colleagues from Prince Edward Island asked the Minister of Transport, who unfortunately is not here this evening, whether we have now seen the last of these disastrous strikes and the specific effects they have in those island provinces. During my term here in parliament, which has not been that long, we have twice experienced the serious effects of a dislocation created by a strike by workers providing basic transportation services to and from Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland.