

Honourable senators, I do not know that I can say much more as to the details of the bill. Perhaps some of my colleagues who listened carefully to the debate in the other house might be willing to give a fuller explanation.

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: May I ask what is meant by the words "narrow these limits"? If the men said they would take three cents instead of four cents, would that narrow the limits?

Hon. Mr. Hayden: No; the four cents increase is basic.

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: If the men say they want five cents instead of four cents, will that narrow the limits?

Hon. Mr. Hayden: No; that would widen them.

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: But if they said they would take three cents—

Hon. Mr. Hayden: They cannot say that.

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: Well, what is meant by narrowing the limits? If the men said they would work forty-two hours, would that be considered as narrowing the limits or widening them?

Hon. Mr. Hayden: That would widen them.

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: How am I to know that it would narrow or widen them?

Hon. Mr. Horner: You know everything.

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: Unlike the honourable gentleman from Blaine Lake (Hon. Mr. Horner), I do not know everything.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: May I add just a word? The impression I have is that the present situation is of grave importance to the country as a whole, and I think it is desirable that in our consideration of it some thought and appreciation should be given to what I believe were the very serious difficulties confronting the negotiators on both sides. It is very easy for the proponents of one side or another to say that the representatives of the railway companies or those of the unions were too rigid and unyielding, but I suggest to honourable senators that in these trying times the negotiators were faced with unusually difficult problems. On the one hand there were the negotiators for the railways. I am not qualified to give an authoritative statement as to the financial consequences of the best offer that they made, but these would represent a very substantial figure. The railway representatives are charged with the responsibility of appreciating that money does not grow on trees, and that sooner or later any increased costs must come from the treasury or from freight

rates. They would realize that in serious times like these that might not only have a very serious effect on the general economy of the country, but if freight rates were increased to such a point as to bring about a serious loss of traffic to the railways the whole problem might be further complicated. And indeed that last mentioned possibility might well be one of the inevitable consequences of this short strike.

Hon. Mr. Quinn: It will be.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Undoubtedly there is the possibility that some business people may conclude that they do not need to use railway services in future so much as they did in the past. As I say, the railway operators were charged with great responsibility.

Hon. Mr. Horner: Tell us something about the government's responsibility.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Well, this is a free country. The government had taken the view that the representatives of the railways and of the unions are responsible men who would realize that the collective bargaining system, which possesses great benefits and advantages, also makes necessary the assumption of heavy responsibilities. My honourable friend from Blaine Lake (Hon. Mr. Horner) would be one of the first to deplore and oppose government intervention and interference with business. More than once he has made the rafters ring by his attacks upon the government.

Hon. Mr. Horner: Just a minute!

Hon. Mr. Robertson: The representatives of the trade unions also were charged with very grave responsibilities. I wish to remind the house that the existing agreement was negotiated in 1948, and that the circumstances surrounding the recent negotiations between railways and employees, both in Canada and the United States, have changed considerably. There has been a continual rise in prices. Almost every index published shows an upward trend. This problem, as I say, does not apply only to Canada but also to the United States. In a recent copy of the *New York Times* it was reported that the Chrysler Corporation had voluntarily offered to its employees a pay increase of, I think, ten cents an hour. That indicates that the company recognizes the seriousness of the problem. The men representing the unions have been faced with a tremendous responsibility, and sooner or later a solution must be found for the problem of adequate pay. Honourable senators will appreciate the difficulties faced by the negotiators on both sides.

The government used every means in its power to settle the wage question before a