

*Railway Operations Act*

represent? It represents a fixed amount which may well prove inadequate.

However, we are faced again with the same thing when we talk of percentage because that is also a fixed amount. It says "5 per cent." Why 5 per cent? At one point the same paragraph says "3 per cent." Why 3 per cent? Three per cent of what? Nobody knows. Those are arbitrary figures. Now, as my colleague from Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) put it so well earlier, we believe we need a more realistic base for the decisions we are going to take since we are unfortunately left with the possibility of doing that as a result of the bargaining failure.

In view of those arbitrary figures which mean nothing why not base our decision on something fair to the employees, something reasonable and especially logical? That would be quite preferable to the proposed amendments which are simply based on the normal increases that those employees could have received due to the increase in the cost of living index. So it would be quite simple in order to solve the problem with which we are faced to replace the words "thirty cents per hour", "five per cent", and "three per cent" which are found in paragraph 5 (1) by "an amount based on a percentage equal to the increase in the cost of living index." That amount would be based on the average salaries of all railway employees. I think that whether you are an employee, a member of management or a member of parliament, that is perfectly fair, reasonable and understanding.

We all appreciate that the increase in income to be granted to those workers should be similar to that granted to workers in other fields, since in this century of progress we have provided nothing but obsolete and cruel means which might have been acceptable in centuries past. Indeed, it is unfortunate in this age of progress that people have to resort to compulsion or to medieval methods such as strikes to solve their problems. It is absurd, but we cannot blame the workers for doing so, because it is the only way available to them to obtain justice.

Therefore, we do not blame the workers for going on strike, but we blame the government for tolerating such a situation. Considering the present emergency situation, we are motivated to find a solution which will not aggravate the employees and will not push them to anarchy as we are told that the 30 cents an hour increase will not be accepted nor the back-to-work order incorporated in Bill C-217.

Then, why not avoid all those conflicts by simply substituting for the word "thirty cents an hour", "5 per cent" and "3 per cent" the wording "an amount based on the increase in the cost of living index"? If this amount is 38 cents, so be it. If it is 40 cents, it will be 40 cents. If it is a lesser amount, it will be so, but we will be assured it is fair.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the House should not at once consider this amendment which I have not yet moved but which I would like to do, to determine whether it would replace adequately the amendment and the subamendment now before the House. In this manner, we could resolve the problem very quickly, that is on August 31 instead of September 1 perhaps. I wonder whether we should immediately study our amendment.

[Mr. Matte.]

• (2320)

[English]

Some hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Chairman: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Chairman, I have listened to the hon. member who has just taken his seat and I wonder whether he is proposing to put his amendment at this stage, or whether he expects to put it after the other amendments have been disposed of.

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The hon. member for Champlain did not present to the Chair an amendment or propose an amendment in due form. This is why the Chair cannot even make a decision. Procedurally, I think there is a difficulty.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) has referred to a proposed amendment, but according to the procedure prevailing in committee, it is impossible to accept any subamendment without having disposed of amendments already before us unless the committee decides to set aside the amendments before it.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

That is exactly what we have been asking for and we know very well that we cannot debate more than two amendments or subamendments at the same time. This is why we have merely referred to our amendment in the hope of getting unanimous consent in order that it may be discussed at the same time and voted on. That is why we have proceeded thus, but if the committee would let us introduce our amendment, then, Mr. Chairman, the problem would be solved.

[English]

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Chairman, I apologize for rising so late on this subamendment, but I should like to draw to the attention of the hon. member from the Social Credit Party that his arithmetic is not all that good. He cannot blame the whole cost of living on the wages of the railway employees.

If the members of the New Democratic Party cannot hear, I can talk loud enough to tell the hon. gentleman who last spoke from the New Democratic Party that when he puts employer against employee and worker against boss, that type of thing went out of existence 65 years ago.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: At least the hon. gentleman who had the good fortune of being born in Quebec City is honest in his philosophical approach as compared with some of the speeches we have heard from that end of the House today. It is obvious that the New Democratic Party once again wants to have it both ways, and it cannot have it both ways.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!