

Legislation Respecting Railway Matters

everything in order to settle two situations. He made his policy at this time a basis for all requests by labour in all parts of Canada.

We meet in an atmosphere of gravity and crisis. The Prime Minister tried to explain why he and his government waited so long. They knew on August 21, after he returned from seeing the sunset in New Brunswick. He knew that night that the strike was going to be called for the following Friday. Where were the strike committee? They were on strike; none of them were here.

An hon. Member: Gone fishing.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Gone with the wind, unable to take action.

Mr. Monteith: Not important to them.

Mr. Diefenbaker: He tried to explain why they waited until the strike got under way. If they have a formula that is fair and equitable, as he now says, did they not have it then? Why wait until the economy of Canada faces the serious paralysis of which the Prime Minister speaks? They just played around. There used to be a British king known as Ethelred the Unready. Now we have a Prime Minister and a government which richly earn that description.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The excuse is that the government did not know there was going to be a strike. You would not expect the Minister of National Defence to know; he was so busy unifying. You would not expect any viewpoint by him. Surely there must have been some others in the cabinet sufficiently integrated with events to realize what every Liberal newspaper in Canada realized, that a strike was coming and action should be taken.

Why did they wait? Where were the members of that strike committee? I suppose they were looking around, Mr. Speaker, to find what planes they might consider under the new purchase plan whereby tens of millions of dollars of Canadian money is to be wasted on aircraft so that ministers can get around better.

Mr. Monteith: So true.

● (3:00 p.m.)

Mr. Diefenbaker: In his opening remarks the Prime Minister made it clear that while he asked for co-operation he intended to defend what he and his government know is a course which is indefensible. The responsibility rests on the Pearson government and no one else. They expected that if they sat

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

around long enough the problem would settle itself. Now the Prime Minister tries to explain that indolence and uncertainty, an attitude not in keeping with the tremendous gravity of the problem.

The Prime Minister says we have another piece of legislation besides the bill to deal with the strike per se. We should like to see that other bill. The Prime Minister asks for co-operation. I offer him the most complete co-operation in order to bring this legislation before the house. There has never been any doubt about that. We are not standing upon any technicality. If there are any members of the house who want to prevent discussion taking place by denying unanimity, we will be able to get around it very easily by someone moving the adjournment of the house in order to discuss this matter of national importance. In that way we will not be wasting two days.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I do hope there is no one in the house—and apparently I am well justified in that expectation—who will do other than agree to give the government the right to proceed at once. We intend to do that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: We intend to go further than that. I am so impressed with the Prime Minister's words, with which I agree, regarding the gravity of the situation that I do not think ordinary hours of sitting are sufficient.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am glad to note the Minister of Labour approves of that suggestion, because he has to share the official responsibility for the failure of this government in recent days. I do not want to single him out because that would be an unjust differentiation. We are prepared to sit longer hours because we want to do everything we can to assist.

We are now asking for a little co-operation on the part of the government. In view of the fact that everything will be done by consent, let us see the bill which the government has in mind in order to implement in part or in whole the MacPherson and Freedman commission reports. There is no reason why this should be held up if there is agreement among hon. members that we see this bill, because this second bill apparently involves a sudden decision. When the Minister of Labour spoke on television he said that in the last two days something had come up of a