

*Air Traffic Control Dispute*

the recommendations which they requested Judge Robinson to make.

Having regard to the reputation of Judge Robinson I should like to know why, upon receipt of these recommendations, the government feels that he knows nothing about the situation. This dispute has not arisen all of a sudden in the past two or three days. It has been going on for some 18 months because of dissatisfaction amongst the members of the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association. Time and time again they have brought their grievances before the government. These have been considered by the Civil Service Commission and by the Department of Transport. Various means were investigated to find a solution to the problem, all to no avail. This problem could not be settled by the government, so they appointed His Honour Judge Robinson to help them in their dilemma. However, when Judge Robinson brought forward his recommendations for a just settlement, the government, which found no method by which to settle the dispute, rejected the sensible suggestions and recommendations made by the judge.

The government which, a few months ago accepted the recommendation of another appointee for the settlement of a dispute on the basis of a 34 per cent increase, now says that 15 per cent is not acceptable in this case. When will they realize that 15 per cent is less than half of 34 per cent and that a recommendation for such an increase should certainly not be subject to any criticism, particularly when it is generally known that the members of this association are entitled to a reasonable increase? Judge Robinson did not bring forward these recommendations in a few days. I suggest that if his recommendations are adopted at the present time, the employees would not strike. We are faced at the present with the threat of a tie-up in our nation's transportation. This strike is not similar to the one which was experienced by Air Canada for at least ten days; it would be a great deal worse. It will shut down all air services in Canada because the air control people are the most important people at the airfields. The air services of this country will be completely suspended and thus the economy of the nation will suffer.

I will not cast aspersions on any minister, but it seems to me that over the past number of years it has been brought forcibly to the attention of anyone who has had the opportunity to study the actions of this government in matters of this kind that the government

has hidden behind the fence of free collective bargaining. This is nothing but a hoax. Free collective bargaining can take place in the various ways provided under the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act. The act permits the government to offer the services of mediators, conciliation boards and conciliators to conduct negotiations on the basis of free collective bargaining. In various disputes similar to this one, we have often heard the government defend the point of view that any interference by a minister of the crown would be an interference with the process of free collective bargaining. This argument is absurd and nonsensical. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) has a responsibility to the people of this country to act as a mediator on the basis of free collective bargaining in many instances where all other attempts at a settlement have failed. This has been my experience on many occasions. No one ever heard any criticism from either labour or management that free collective bargaining has been interfered with because a minister of labour acted as conciliator or mediator.

• (4:40 p.m.)

In this respect the government was guilty of a tremendous failure. This is the reason we have had a disruption of our economy and that labour-management relations, and in turn their relation with the government, have broken down and deteriorated in the past few years. The government has made no effort, but has sat back and waited and waited in the hope that some miracle of some sort would occur, and that a strike would not affect the various sectors of our economy. But it has not worked out this way.

This government must realize that they have a responsibility to the people of this country. This government must wake up to the fact that they have a responsibility in the field of labour-management relations. This government must wake up and realize that they must participate in labour-management relations and endeavour to bring about a solution to the disputes which have been occurring in this country.

By doing this they do not need to worry about injecting themselves into this field and disrupting the process of free collective bargaining—far from it. The government must assist the process of free collective bargaining. Any observer of the disputes that have occurred in the past years, particularly in the federal field of jurisdiction, will have noticed