

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The committee has heard the amendment proposed by the Minister of Justice.

● (0200)

Mr. Lawrence: On a point of order; Mr. Chairman, some of us on this side of the House thought that the minister in his amendment would include some reference to the cost of living. The amendment does not do so.

The Deputy Chairman: There is nothing preventing hon. members from moving an amendment afterwards. The minister has now moved his own amendment.

Mr. Reid: It will be added as a subamendment.

Mr. Blenkarn: Do I take it that it is necessary to amend the minister's amendment?

Mr. Reid: That is right.

Mr. Orlikow: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I do not want to interrupt the hon. member for Peel South but wish to spend a few moments in commenting on the amendment moved. The fact that the minister had to bring in this amendment is clear proof of the point we have tried to make throughout this debate. There has not been, on the part of railway management, any desire or intention to engage in real, meaningful bargaining. I am not surprised at the great differences of opinion between the companies concerned and their employees with regard to sections of the agreement to do with wage rates. Any company tries to maximize profits and does so by trying to keep its labour costs as low as possible. On the other hand, the employees of any company try to get as much by way of wages and fringe benefits as possible. That there may be differences of opinion in these areas is not surprising.

There have been differences of opinion between the companies and their employees for many years over job security and the employees have had a good deal of experience in trying to deal with this question. Some years ago they negotiated an agreement calling for a job security fund. Money was put into that fund at the rate of one cent per hour per employee. That money has virtually never been used because the terms of that agreement were so restrictive that the companies would not, or could not, use it.

In the current negotiations the unions were prepared to make an important concession in order to introduce a section in the agreement which would protect the rights of their members. They were prepared to give up any craft or job description and, if the company would agree to guarantee the jobs of employees who had two or more years of employment, they were prepared to say that the company could direct any employee laid off as a result of automation, or for any other reason, to any other job and if the employee so adversely affected refused to take the job to which he was directed, he could be laid off without protest by the union.

The evidence submitted by the union and the conciliation board showed conclusively that that agreement would not have cost the companies one cent. Despite that, the companies did not show the slightest intention to reach any agreement in this area. Is it any wonder that railway

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employees are angry and suspicious, and that members of parliament are getting calls from their railway union constituents who tell them that no matter what parliament passes by way of legislation, they will not go back to work? I am not saying they are right. I am not urging them to disobey this law any more than I would urge any citizen to disobey any law, whether I agree with the law or not: for the law should be obeyed. Yet railway employees feel this way these days, to a large extent because, as the companies have become used to saying no, they have continued to say no even though such agreement will not cost them one cent.

What are the facts? I touched on them briefly last night. The work force of the non-operating employees has been reduced by more than one-third in the last 20 years. Productivity has increased greatly; it has increased in the railway industry probably more than in any other industry in the country. The age of employees working for the railways is such that in the case of the CNR the normal rate of attrition is about 18 per cent per year, while the attribution in railway employment is less than 3 per cent per year.

It is obvious that normal attrition can adequately take care of the expected reduction in the numbers of non-operating railway employees, especially in light of the seniority of the present employees. Despite 16 per cent of CNR employees now being over 55 years of age and almost one-third of CNR employees having less than four years of employment with the company, the company simply refuses to deal with the recommendations and with the suggestions made by its employees and their unions. It refuses to take seriously the proposals made by Professor Weldon to the conciliation board, that all employees of four years or more seniority should be guaranteed employment with the railway regardless of the fact that their particular jobs might be eliminated by reason of automation or other reasons. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that the employees are angry. It is sad indeed that we need to deal, by way of legislation, with a problem which should have been freely and willingly resolved between the companies and the employees, as this would not have cost the companies any money at all.

We have looked at the amendment the minister has proposed and it seems to go a substantial way toward meeting the objections which the railway unions put forward about the question of job security being left in the conciliation board report as outlined by the chairman and not being included in the bill as originally proposed by the government. The minister's amendment goes a substantial way to meeting the objections of the railway unions and the employees they represent, and for that reason I will not move the amendment to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, as you know, the hon. member for Peel South indicated that he had a further amendment to move to this particular clause. I think he is ready with it now.

● (0210)

Mr. Reid: Mr. Chairman, on that same point I think before the subamendment can be approved the motion would have to be accepted, and then the hon. member for Peel South could move his amendment.