

Maintenance of Railway Operation Act

be no increase in freight rates, and they were well aware that the government would not provide them with a subsidy, and when they were well aware that there would be no loss in their revenues because the government would insist on their operations being maintained, they were in a perfect position to say, no, no, no, we are not interested in negotiations, because we have nothing to lose. This was the agreement; this was the arrangement that was cooked up between the government and the railways.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I cannot allow that to pass or the hon. gentleman to indulge in this type of remark. This suggestion on his part is an unmitigated untruth.

Some hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Argue: If the government had wanted to do something—

Some hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Argue:—in this situation to bring about an agreeable settlement, I think it should have been done. The Prime Minister tells me it was not cooked up. I accept his word.

Some hon. Members: Well.

Some hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Argue: That is more than my hon. friends on the other side often do. That is very often what they fail to do.

I suggest that in the handling of all of this dispute the government has damaged normal relations with the trade unions in this country, and that is the important thing that is flowing from this whole episode.

This afternoon the Prime Minister reiterated the principles that he put forward yesterday. He said, as reported at page 358 of *Hansard*:

We have taken the stand that we shall not subsidize in this connection because to do so would simply mean that any time there is a dispute across this country with a national company involved—

Then, there would be a request for a subsidy. Mr. Speaker, I think that statement is inaccurate. I do not feel that other industries are in the same position; other industries are not in a position where their revenues are frozen. Other workers are not in a position where they have been refused the recourse to withdrawing their labour.

The Prime Minister said that there should be no increase in freight rates until the report of the royal commission on transportation has been considered.

An hon. Member: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Argue: The government has put forward these proposals and these propositions which have made negotiations under these circumstances completely impossible.

[Mr. Argue.]

The government has said today by bringing forth this legislation that they are not going to allow a strike at this time. I want to ask the Prime Minister this question: Has the government made any decision as to whether the prevention of the right to strike at this time will be a consistent government policy in relation to the railways or is this removal of the right to strike at this time the removal of the right to strike at this time only?

The hon. member for Bonaville-Twillington (Mr. Pickersgill) said he was in favour of compulsion. He said he was in favour of this bill which—

Mr. Pickersgill: I rise on a question of privilege. The hon. gentleman has no right to deform what I said. We are absolutely opposed to this bill. What I said was that if this strike could not be settled in any other way we would be agreeable to using compulsion to settle it, but on the basis of the conciliation board report.

Mr. Argue: All right; that is fair enough. That is exactly what the hon. member said, and if I misconstrued what he said, then I apologize to him. The attitude of the Liberal party is that compulsion should be used to prevent the strike, if that is necessary. The attitude of the Prime Minister is that the strike should be prevented—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is your position, as stated on Monday.

Mr. Argue: I will come to the C.C.F. position.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No, your position.

Mr. Argue: I will come to my position in a minute.

Mr. Hellyer: What is your position?

Mr. Argue: Oh, I know the Prime Minister has two positions; one position before an election and another position after an election. The Prime Minister, as I took down his words, said that the normal processes will be limited only by the right to strike now, not by the right to strike. I ask him if that means that next spring the railway workers are in a position that they can say to the company in these negotiations, we are in a position to withdraw our services? Has the Prime Minister come to the position that a railway strike at any time cannot be allowed? If he takes the position that a railway strike at any time cannot be allowed, then he has taken away from the railway unions their bargaining position. He has taken away from them the one weapon they have with which to negotiate with management. He has made, by his attitude and by the provisions of this