

Maintenance of Railway Operation Act

amendment, I shall now place it before the house. It is moved by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson) seconded by the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) as amendment to the motion for second reading that:

This house declines to proceed with the second reading of a bill the provisions of which establish a compulsory and discriminatory wage freeze for railway employees contrary to the recommendation for a wage increase made by a board of conciliation appointed under the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act.

Is the house ready for the question?

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): Mr. Speaker, the C.C.F. and New Party caucus opposes the principle of the bill. In substance, we view the railway industry as a regulated one—indeed, a severely regulated one—regulated by the federal jurisdiction. We feel that this puts an onus on the government and the nation which have supported such regulation. This onus demands recognition that an industry regulated as a consequence of national policy must have a conception of a standard—a fair standard—for determining wage levels.

We have heard and hear so much about the normal process of industrial relations. How can we have a normal process—that is a free fight to a decision between labour and management—when severe limits are placed on the income of the industry set by law and regulation? Further, the genesis of such limitations relates to a national view that railways have a unique public responsibility. After all, the agreement of us all that a strike would be harmful to the nation is another way of saying that this is a unique industry, a vital one, which cannot stand isolated from the national interest.

This being so, a careful scrutiny of and respect for the conciliation process in industrial relations is imperative. This legislation, we feel, destroys the conciliation process; the long months of careful preparation by both sides, the documentation, the hearings, the argument, and at the end, nullity.

It is a commonplace that no one wants a strike. It seems to me that only a person with a shadowy death impulse could wish one here. The only ones I have heard advocate a strike seem to be the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, the Canadian trucking association and Mr. Crump, the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. I have not heard Mr. Crump advocate it but I have been told on good authority that he was quite prepared for a three or four months' strike.

We should all realize that our view that we do not want a strike does not mean that there has been anything phony or unconstitutional or wrong about the strike that has

been called. We in this party are convinced that the workers involved do not like the idea of a strike and that they supported a strike in the vote that was taken not with enthusiasm but grimly to convince management and the third interested party, the nation, that they feel fiercely that their case must be considered, and their case, of course, now is the Milvain report. They think it is a just report and represents the minimum that they should accept. We agree.

I have been very close to railroading and railroaders since my childhood. My father was a grievance man on the Canadian National Railways and most of my male relatives are railroaders. There are four divisional points in my constituency, 700 miles of main line track and about 500 miles of branch line track. I cannot escape taking a very close interest in the railway situation. I have talked with very many railroaders and most of them have expressed concern, particularly the people on our own government railroad, about the state of the railways and the morale of the workers. To me the strike vote and the whole situation we are faced with today is to quite an extent the result of the revolutionary changes that are taking place on the railways and the feeling of fear and insecurity that has gripped so many of the employees.

If you want a few illustrations of that fear go to the divisional points. Go to a place like Redditt where the tracks are being ripped up or a place like Nakina where only a few weeks ago there was on the horizon the movement right out of town of 50 families. We know that a lot of dislocation has to be accepted and the railroaders are willing to accept it but they want preparation. They want information; they want security; they want decent treatment; they want understanding; and they are not getting these things at the present time.

For that reason I should like to plead with all hon. members, regardless of how they are going to vote on the bill, to have sympathy and understanding for the railway workers. They are not a group of highly paid malcontents. I know this about them, that their morale is low, that insecurity is very rife among them and that they do not really know where they are going in terms of their jobs and their future. Despite this insecurity these people have been willing to vote for a strike. There is nothing phony about the vote at all. I am convinced that it is genuine. I know that in any group in the country such as the railroaders there will be objectors but I am convinced that there was overwhelming support for a strike. These people feel that they merit completely the recommendation that has been accepted by their leaders.