

Air Traffic Control Dispute

have tried to make as complete an explanation as I can. I would like to assure hon. members that we intend to carry on negotiations to the best of our ability, and I for one hope we do not have to use the legislation which is on the order paper. We had to give 48 hours notice because of what happened in the house last week.

This morning I suggested to the parties involved that since negotiations were going better, maybe the strike deadline could be moved back. I said that we really were faced with an extremely short timetable at this point, and I said I would be putting the notice on the order paper providing they would continue negotiations in good faith. They agreed to do this, and I can assure hon. members that if necessary I will introduce the legislation, but I for one hope we do not have to do that.

Mr. MacDonald (Prince): I would like to ask a question of the minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind hon. members of what I said a moment ago. There are only about 25 minutes left in view of Royal Assent, and I think the Chair should be given the opportunity to recognize a spokesman for the minority parties. I understand the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) wants to speak, and it appears that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) has been writing copious notes and may want to ask a question.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is all, Mr. Speaker. The minister has gone into a great deal of detail, and this shows the benefit of the discussion which took place here this afternoon.

Is it clear that with the exception of one portion of the report, on which the minister takes the view that the judge arrived at a wrong conclusion, the report is acceptable to the government, and has the treasury board so declared?

Mr. Benson: There is another point that we—although there may be adjustments in other ways—as a government at the present time have not accepted, and that is the principle of longevity pay. We are in a difficult position here because Mr. Justice Montpetit's report on the post office said longevity pay should not be introduced, and here we have a report from Judge Robinson recommending that it be introduced. I think that the problems can be overcome without facing up to the question of longevity pay. Ultimately we will have to face up to it and I hope this will be when we get into the collective bargaining

[Mr. Benson.]

processes. I would like to reiterate that the settlement being made is only to July 31 next, at which time the people involved will be in proper collective bargaining, under law, with the government.

Mr. MacDonald (Prince): I wish to clear up some misunderstanding. In his remarks the President of the Treasury Board said that the comparison should be made—and he thought quite properly so—with the air line despatchers. Could he answer two questions related to this?

● (5:20 p.m.)

First of all, does he think the responsibility exercised by these despatchers is as great as the undertaking exercised by the air traffic controllers in relation to flight? Secondly, does he know any air traffic controllers who are over age 50, and if not why not.

Mr. Benson: Perhaps I might answer the second part of the question first. I do not know that many air traffic controllers. There are a thousand spread out across Canada, and I do not have an intimate knowledge of their ages. In respect of the first part of the question, I believe the duties of the air traffic controllers and despatchers are comparable. I do not know whether this goes down to the nth degree of comparison, but I know that both groups have very great responsibilities. Based on the submissions of the air traffic controllers and the suggestions of Judge Robinson, we believe there is a basis of comparison.

Mr. MacDonald (Prince): Is it not true that actually the pilot is responsible, on the advice of the despatcher, whereas the air traffic controller has the final responsibility in respect of the flights.

Mr. Benson: I am told that this varies from air line to air line. In some air lines the despatcher decides whether or not the aircraft takes off. I am not sure whether or not this is the case in respect of Air Canada, but in respect of C.P.A. I believe the pilot makes this decision. It varies from air line to air line.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, if I may, I should like to suggest to the hon. minister who just sat down, and to other members of the house, that the issue is not at all what the minister tried to suggest it is. The issue is not at all whether or not he agreed with a particular calculation of Judge Robinson; the issue is not at all whether or not the government thought Judge Robinson