

LABOUR CONDITIONS

VISIT TO OTTAWA OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
MONTREAL DISTRICT AIRCRAFT
WORKERS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Leader of the Opposition): I desire to make an inquiry of the Prime Minister with respect to a matter that has come to my attention this afternoon. Some thirty representatives of Montreal Aircraft Lodge No. 712, covering a jurisdiction of about twenty thousand aircraft workers in four plants in the Montreal district, are in Ottawa, and from conversations I have had with them I rather think the situation there has deteriorated to such an extent that I am compelled to ask the right hon. gentleman if he will be good enough to make some intervention in the matter so that in the national interests the position will not become worse. I make this request in all sincerity of purpose because in my opinion it is greatly in the national interest that the Prime Minister should see these men and perhaps intervene so that the situation will not develop into something which will be detrimental to our war production. I wonder if he would give consideration to this suggestion.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): May I say to my hon. friend and to hon. members of the house that at this time of war there is of course no more important service, next to that performed by our armed forces, than the continuous production of war industries in this country, and wherever it has been possible to do so, I have done my utmost to help to further both these large objectives. With respect to the specific request of my hon. friend, that I should of my own initiative, I take it, see some members of the aircraft industry, employees who are in the city at the present time, I would say to him that, as I am sure he will understand, in matters of this kind I have to consider not merely the immediate situation but what may come to be looked upon as the course of procedure which is to be the regularly recognized and adopted one. The Department of Labour is the department of government which primarily has to do with industrial disputes. I am aware that some members representing employees of the aircraft industry were in the city on Saturday of last week and that others were here to-day. On Saturday I communicated with the Department of Labour to ascertain what steps

[Mr. George Black.]

were being taken towards conferring with these representatives. I was told at the time I communicated that three or four of the representatives were then in conference in the Department of Labour with one or more officers of the department and that consideration was being given to their representations. I believe it is also true that the matter to which my hon. friend has referred is one which comes in part at least within the jurisdiction of the regional board which is located at Quebec, and I understand that an officer of the Department of Labour has been in Quebec, and possibly is there to-day, looking into the situation.

I should like to have it understood and known that if it is necessary for me personally to intervene in industrial disputes it must be only after the matter has been carefully considered by the cabinet as a whole. I cannot as Prime Minister, with the obligations I have to meet, much as I should like to be able to be of assistance, undertake to meet delegations that come to the city to discuss industrial disputes. Moreover, there is, I think, reason why the greatest possible caution should be exercised in having the government as a government intervene in any dispute which it is possible to have settled between the parties themselves, or under the machinery which is provided by the government.

I will carefully consider my hon. friend's request, but I have to make it clear that all these matters should follow a line of procedure which is definitely known and which has been framed with a view to facilitating adjustments.

Mr. GRAYDON: My information is that this suggestion is made only after other avenues of approach have been thoroughly explored. May I also point out, in case the Prime Minister is under any misapprehension as to the basis of the dispute that in this instance it is not a dispute between employers and employees. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether it is possible for him to give any undertaking that the question will come before the cabinet, if he is not able personally to intervene.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I have pleasure in saying that I shall see that the matter is considered immediately by the government. As a matter of fact, it has been before the government already.

REPORTS AS TO UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE CITY
OF WINNIPEG

On the orders of the day:

Mr. S. H. KNOWLES (Winnipeg North Centre): I should like to ask the Minister of