

Adjournment Debate

For example, if a friend comes from outside the province during hunting season and wants to go hunting, I lend him my shotgun or rifle. I make sure, of course, that he has a hunting licence. However, the way this particular act now reads without the amendment, the situation is that you can no longer lend your gun to your friend or your neighbour unless both you and the person who borrows the gun are in possession of a firearms acquisition certificate. Under those circumstances I support motion No. 9.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

TRANSPORT—ESCALATION OF PENSIONS OF RETIRED RAILWAY EMPLOYEES—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, June 16, and on Monday, July 4, I put questions to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) regarding the report of Dr. Noel Hall concerning Canadian railway pension plans. In my question of June 16, which is reported in *Hansard* at pages 6742 and 6743, the gist of my question was in this sentence:

Since referring that report to management and the unions does not do a solitary thing for railway workers already retired, both CNR and CPR, will the government take action to make sure those old timers are not forgotten?

The Minister of Transport replied in these words:

Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Labour is putting what analysis the question may require before the government. In the meantime a good number of matters referred to in the report are, by Dr. Hall's own definition, suitable for negotiation.

In my supplementary question I protested that negotiation between management and the unions would do nothing for those already retired, but the answer to that supplementary question was no better than the answer to the first question.

In my question of July 4, which is on page 7249 of *Hansard*, I again tried to make the same emphasis. It was in these words:

In view of the fact that any action that management and unions might take will not do anything for Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railway workers already retired, and in view of the fact that these pensioners have had no escalation of their pensions at all in 1977, will the minister put pressure on both Canadian National and Canadian Pacific to bring in escalation of the pensions of their retired workers this year?

● (2200)

Again the reply of the Minister of Transport was to the effect that this should be the subject of bargaining between the parties. Again I protested, and again I got nothing that was satisfactory from the minister.

[Mr. Neil.]

The railway workers of Canada, and in particular the retired railway workers, the older ones, are beginning to think that the Hall Commission was a put-off. Dr. Hall was appointed in July of 1974 to make a study of all Canadian railway pension plans. It took him more than two years to make this study and present his report. That report was presented to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) on September 8, 1976, but translating and printing it consumed considerable time, so we did not get it until January, 1977. We are now in July of 1977. It is three years since Dr. Hall was commissioned to do his job.

I have some doubts about the usefulness of the report. It is a summary of the situation, an accounting of the facts, but it does not contain many recommendations. There are a few, and it is true that, in so far as any reorganization of railway pension plans for the future is concerned, Dr. Hall says that management and the union should sit down and do it by collective bargaining. But Dr. Hall also says that the situation for railway workers who are now retired is urgent, pressing, and serious. Most of them have had very little by way of escalation and none at all in the last year or so.

The point of my question to the Minister of Transport—and to the Minister of Labour when I catch him here to ask him about the same issue—has to do with those who are already retired. I want not to be put off with the line that it is up to management and unions to negotiate. When unions negotiate, they do so for their members, the ones who are working. The retired workers, the railway pensioners, do not have anyone at the bargaining table, and Dr. Hall says it is urgent that something be done for them.

My plea to the government is in the following terms: When is the government going to talk in plain language to CN and CP and to any other railways, including those who are responsible for the old Provident Fund in the Atlantic provinces and so on, about the needs of those who are already retired? Asking them to wait until a new scheme has been worked out is telling them they will die, all of them, before anything is done for them.

I am used to this government being heartless, but surely there is a limit. I hope that the one parliamentary secretary who is sitting over there—it is not his department but maybe he has a heart which the others do not have—will be able to tell us tonight that the government takes seriously the recommendation of Dr. Hall with regard to those already retired and the pleas that we are making from this side of the House that we do not want those who are already retired to have to wait forever for a reorganization of railway pension plans.

We want an adequate cost of living escalation of the pensions of retired CN and CP employees now. By now, I say to the parliamentary secretary, I mean tonight.

Mr. Ross Milne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) puts forward a very persuasive case. In the absence of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Olivier) I have been asked to reply on behalf of the minister.