

by the house by way of a notice of motion. The mechanics of tabling and of revocation are set forth in the bill.

It is therefore, Mr. Speaker, a very important feature of this bill that the parties are left free to negotiate, with the help of a mediator, and that, if any arbitration is necessary, it will only be instituted by the government subject to an overriding veto of the House of Commons.

The bill includes provision to safeguard the right of the employees now on strike to return to work without fear of being discharged from their employment or disciplined in any other way because of their participation in strike action.

The bill provides for the immediate withdrawal of the notice given by union representatives to their employees calling the strike, which will become invalid when this bill becomes law.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the bill provides for an immediate increase in the rate of wages in the amount of 4 per cent effective January 1, 1966 and an additional 4 per cent effective July 1, 1966. As I have said, that can be varied, of course, as a result of the negotiation which will follow the passage of this bill.

Consequently, the employees who would resume their employment would be given an immediate increase for the year 1966—and this did not happen in 1960—without prejudice to the position of the parties to the negotiations that will continue to implement the collective agreement extended to December 31, 1967. The amount of the immediate increase represents the figure established by Mr. Justice Munroe and accepted by Mr. Justice Cameron for the year 1966 in the two conciliation board reports, presided over by those gentlemen. Any further change for 1966 and for 1967, as I have already indicated, would depend upon the results of the mediation or the arbitration specified in the bill.

Mr. Speaker, that is essentially the bill which is now before the house for consideration. I think it is a good, fair and reasonable bill and I hope it will commend itself to this house. I also hope that if and when this bill becomes law it will prove to be effective in bringing this strike to an end, because that is its purpose—to end the strike and to continue the process of negotiation in order to reach a fair and reasonable settlement between the workers and the railways, aided by mediation appointed by the government. I hope this will be assisted as a result of the legislation on railways which will be before the house if

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and when we dispose of this particular bill. In that spirit, Mr. Speaker, I commend this bill to the house and hope it will be effective in achieving the object we all have in mind, namely the ending of this strike.

• (9:00 p.m.)

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is 16 years ago today that the then prime minister, Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, had parliament recalled and introduced legislation with respect to a strike which had been in progress for a period of seven or eight days. Sixteen years thereafter to the day parliament, for the second time, is dealing with a strike that has been under way in this case some three days already. I have heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) on many occasions throughout the years that he has been minister, leader of the opposition and Prime Minister, but I have never known him to labour, as he did on this occasion, in endeavouring to make some reasonable explanation for the dilatory uncertainty, the ineptitude, the chronic indifference of this government to the need of action, as was evident this evening as he spoke.

The Prime Minister recalled the four occasions on which the matter of strikes had been before parliament. He said—and with this view I agree—that Canada expects, all Canadians expect, that the strike will be brought to an end in a proper and equitable manner, fair to the nation and fair to labour. Indeed, I go further than that. Never in all the years that I have followed public affairs have I known a government to be criticized by its greatest admirers in the press for its failure to act before the strike took place. Why didn't they act? Why this attitude of waiting around and hoping that something would turn up. It is because, sir, this government has lost all sense of proportion. Today we have a government that will not act unless forced to do so. It does not make so many mistakes, so long as it is thinking about these matters. It is when it finally makes a decision that the really serious mistakes are made.

Will this legislation in its present form bring an end to the strike? Will the Prime Minister say that as a result of the informal discussions which he and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) had with labour representatives, the labouring men covered by these agreements, those working on the railways, are prepared to return to work on the