

Maintenance of Railway Operation Act

this suggestion because it will preserve those methods and principles which are certainly not preserved by the measure now under consideration.

We could be dealing with this bill very shortly if the Prime Minister were to indicate his willingness to make that change, which merely constitutes an amendment. It may be said, and quite properly, that on second reading we deal with the principle of the bill. If the principle of the bill were only the resumption of the services of the railways, then I am certain every member of the house would vote for it without a moment's delay. If the principle were merely the restoration of those services which are so necessary to the home life of our people and the work of our whole country, then there would be no thought in anybody's mind of even raising any question, and I should think the bill would probably have been adopted by now. I sincerely hope that the Prime Minister will consider the seriousness of going ahead with the bill now before us. I hope he will accept the suggestion I have made, or, if he has a better one, make another suggestion; but I suggest that we sit continuously until the bill has become law. The matter is urgent, but nothing can ever be so urgent that in solving one problem we create grave problems of another kind, not only for the moment but for years to come.

This is a serious moment in the history of Canada. Because of the fact that we had no legislation to deal with such a situation; because of the fact that workers, management and the public were encouraged to believe, by statements emanating from Ottawa, that there would be a last minute solution, we find ourselves in a position in which the Prime Minister himself has said he did not expect we would find ourselves. Let us not take any chance of finding ourselves in that position again. The Prime Minister has enunciated the proposition that the economy of Canada must not be paralysed by events of this kind. When we have dealt with the bill, let us then proceed to deal with a method which will carry out that proposition coolly, calmly, and with consideration of the measure we have in mind. In the meantime the rights of every Canadian would be protected under the amendment I have moved. There would be no interference with the rights of any Canadian to the services of the railways. There would be no interference with the rights of the railway organizations and there would be no interference with those long established rights of the workers which have had a very considerable bearing on the measure of harmony that has existed in this country between management and labour throughout past years.

We are sometimes inclined to exaggerate the number of disputes. If there is a strike, naturally it is noticed by everyone. What is often ignored is the vastly greater number of friendly and co-operative solutions that are reached by the system of collective bargaining that has been worked out through long years of trial and error. In finding a solution for this problem, let us not create equally great problems for another day.

In a spirit of good will, and with a desire to bring into operation these vital arteries of the life of Canada as soon as possible, we can solve this problem in a way that will protect the rights of all our people, the rights of every part of our community, will continue the efficient operation of our great railways, and will be to the best advantage of the nation that we love.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggan): Mr. Speaker, I am certain that every member of the house, regardless of where he sits, is anxious to see the immediate resumption of railway transportation services in Canada. The leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) outlined the difficulties under which various producers are suffering at the present moment. Let me remark that not only the producers and every consumer in Canada are suffering from the great strike now in progress, but also every railroad employee involved in the strike. The loss of earnings to that great group of Canadian citizens is a serious one to every one of them. From what I know I am certain that the employees of the railroad system would be glad indeed to resume work tomorrow and operate our transportation services if they were assured that they would receive consideration at this time of what they regard as their just claims.

The situation in the house illustrates what we feared might happen if this matter were brought to the floor of parliament. We have a bill before us and we have an amendment moved by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew), both of which have to be carefully scrutinized in order to understand their implications. These two proposals, the bill and the amendment, mean that we are to be involved in a fairly prolonged debate. While we are debating in the house, the railway transportation system of Canada is not running. Producers, consumers and workers are alike denied the usual facilities, earnings and means of life which the railway transportation system brings to them.

A week ago today, the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis), who is sitting beside me, telephoned me from Vancouver and drew this very fact to my attention. He made the suggestion that I should get in touch with the Prime Minister (Mr. St.