

## TRANSPORT

### MOTION TO DEBATE MEASURE TO TERMINATE RAILWAY STRIKE—REFERRED TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On the Order:

Motion of the Honourable B. Alasdair Graham:

That the question of the desirability of enacting immediately a measure to terminate the present railway strike be referred to a Committee of the Whole; and

That the Committee meet later this day.

**Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Deputy Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I move that the Senate do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the motion and hear witnesses, and that Senator Corbin take the Chair.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

### CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Senate was accordingly adjourned during pleasure and put into a Committee of the Whole on the question, the Honourable Eymard G. Corbin in the Chair.

**The Chairman:** Honourable senators, the Senate is now in Committee of the Whole on Senator Graham's motion.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** Mr. Chairman, before we call the first witness, I would like to thank colleagues on the other side for agreeing to our suggestion that we proceed at this stage, before the bill comes to the Senate, with the witnesses whom we were hoping to have appear before us following second reading.

This has been done for two reasons. One reason is that the affected parties are given a chance to come before Parliament. I understand that during debate in the other place, the affected parties were not given a chance to testify or to give their view on the legislation. It is important that we hear them.

This is in the spirit of cooperation to accelerate the bill through Parliament. Had we waited until Monday, there would have been additional hours spent before the vote. By this procedure today, we are accelerating the process in the Senate. It is in the spirit of an understanding before the Canadian people that we have taken this unusual step of studying the legislation before it has been referred to the Senate.

I hope that the Bloc Québécois in particular will realize that despite their obstructionist tactics, there are enough people in this country who are concerned about Canada's future that we can move ahead in this way.

[ Senator Graham ]

**Senator Fairbairn:** Honourable senators, I would like to follow with a few remarks in response to my honourable friend. I concur entirely that this is a situation where the attention of this Parliament is essential. It is important that under the circumstances we carry out our function in a speedy manner to afford those who are most intimately involved with this issue the opportunity to come and explain their points of view. Their considerations are important to the deliberations of this chamber, and also to the people of Canada. I join with my honourable friend in hoping that those who would choose to obstruct this kind of legislation will realize the enormous risks for this country in doing so.

• (1520)

**The Chairman:** Before we proceed, I should like to call to your attention the presence in the gallery of the Minister of Labour, Madam Robillard.

Honourable senators, our first witness is Mr. Paul Tellier, President and Chief Executive Officer of Canadian National. He is accompanied by Mr. Terry Leneker.

I understand there is a loose agreement to allow approximately 30 minutes to each witness. I will not adhere strictly to that time-frame, but will attempt to recognize all honourable senators who wish to put questions.

Honourable senators, I believe the witnesses have been informed that we expect from them a 10-minute statement, with the remaining 20 minutes left to questions and answers. As I have said, however, the chair will be flexible.

**Mr. Paul Tellier, President and CEO, Canadian National:** Honourable senators, I will be brief in making my general comments. We believe the current situation to be quite serious for Canadian National and for shippers, manufacturers, plants, businesses and farmers across the country. As well, it is a serious situation for the economy as a whole.

Negotiations have been going on for 18 months. The media has reported that these collective agreements expired 15 months ago, which is accurate. However, in September of 1993, roughly three-and-a-half months before the expiration of these collective agreements, we resumed negotiations with the unions to put in place new collective agreements reflecting the economic realities of the 1990s. Therefore, while we find ourselves in the most unfortunate situation of a strike at Canadian National, it is not because we did not try very hard to negotiate.

I should like to explain why we think these negotiations are important for Canadian National. When negotiations commenced, we had four priorities. The first priority was to do something about employment security. Much has been written about this priority of the rail industry. However, there are other equally important priorities. Wage structure was one priority. Another was trade flexibility and an attempt to eliminate artificial barriers between various trades on the shop floor. Elimination of these barriers could save Canadian National \$10 million. I am referring to the jurisdictional disputes between the various trades, such as electricians, machinists, and boilermakers. The final priority has to do with introducing flexibility into the working rules, especially in relation to the running trades that operate the trains.