

We cannot allow the strike to go on, but there does not appear to be any way of solving it short of legislation. The minister, and anyone who has had experience with labour management, as I have, know that a strike has never produced anything worthwhile at all unless it is a strike for recognition. We have to provide a means by which these men and women can go back to work and resolve their disputes with their employers in a way which will not disrupt the lives of the people of this country. I believe that the body of the bill plus the amendments that we have before us now constitute the most acceptable way of accomplishing that aim. I urge all hon. members to vote for the bill, as I shall. As I promised, Mr. Chairman, I did not use all my time. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Dionne: Mr. Chairman, we have now before us a bill entitled: "An Act to provide for the resumption and continuance of operations of railways and for the settlement of the disputes with respect to terms and conditions of employment between railway companies and their employees."

The proposed wage adjustments are based on the conciliation report submitted in July.

The minister will not succeed in making us believe that he has made an effort. Those proposals have already been made. I recognize that many other seasonal, part-time or often unemployed workers would appreciate the opportunity of obtaining a steady job under those circumstances, but it does not satisfactorily settle the problem of railway employees.

● (1720)

With a patched-up labour legislation, this government has favoured the spreading of a type of contagious disease that we could call the strike disease, and what is unfortunate is that it is spreading at such a rate that we ought to change as soon as possible this legislation so as to avoid this multiplication of strikes with all the inconveniences involved: loss of pay, disorganization of the economic situation, not to mention disgraceful scenes such as we have seen yesterday. Altogether, the legislation will bring a slight improvement in conditions existing before the strike but it must be possible to set pay rates more in keeping with the workers' demands.

Furthermore, there are several other factors besides the salary to be considered and that the legislation does not even refer to.

No doubt some would be ready to point out that negotiations will continue. It has been said in this house today that there were no negotiations, but I see that the negotiations have failed. Therefore, there should be something done which at least looks like negotiations and which would satisfy the demands of the workers.

There are other points, some of which have been discussed, which could be solved later. But if we base ourselves on previous developments, the railway employees have not received much satisfaction. There are important factors to consider in setting the working conditions of an employee. It must be taken into account that the employee is a human being and not a machine and that he wants security and stability. Generally he also wants the place

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where he works to be well organized and well managed. It is normal that he be treated fairly. He also wants to be informed on the financial situation of the firm, so that he may be sure that he will receive a fair income. These are basic realities inherent to the human condition.

I hope that this legislation providing for a return to work will be modified and applied in all fairness by all parties and that it will respect all legitimate opinions when the time comes to solve a dispute over working conditions. I remind you once more that there are many other things to consider besides salaries.

I seconded, at the beginning of the session yesterday, a motion by my colleagues the hon. member for Rimouski (Mr. Allard) asking for a detailed inquiry on the administration of the Canadian National Railways; I urge once again that such an inquiry be undertaken. Without a doubt, the people would better understand the causes of misunderstanding. A complete revision of the pension plan would enable us to see that the benefits could be shared more equitably amongst the employees.

We might be surprised to find out the cost of maintaining luxurious trains and organizing picnic cars or palaces on wheels. It might be wise to look into the salaries of some directors, starting with the president who earns \$75,000 a year, and a whole series of assistants and deputy-assistants several of whom, it seems to me, are more favorites of the regime than rail transport experts. Judging from the railway timetables, we can better understand the claims of the railway employees.

We are now going through a sufficiently perturbed evolutionary stage in union movements to make the supporters of collective bargaining pause and think things over. Succeeding disputes leading to numerous strikes of all kinds certainly do not reflect mutual agreement.

Supporters of today's strike will find reasons to justify their right to strike tomorrow. An endless renewal leads us into adventures without solution and helps to maintain, to the detriment of the interested parties, an atmosphere of collective disagreement, instead of fostering the agreement hoped for by the majority.

I have already mentioned on various occasions that I consider strikes as an evil that is sometimes necessary and that must be kept from spreading. Any serious observer will admit that unions were born to meet a need and that need continues to exist.

I assumed for over ten years the duties of president of a union local and I have an excellent recollection of labour-management relations. However, I find it abnormal to conclude that strikes are the best solution to right the discomforts that emerge in such relations. One must not lack imagination to the point of thinking that a whole series of mistakes can be corrected by setting out to make more mistakes. Those concerned should rather pursue the line of reason and act as adults. In a democratic country everyone has a right to express his views and may even wish to have them respected. However, he will have to have enough understanding for those of others.

The important thing is to pinpoint the many causes of misunderstanding and set the bearings of labour legislation towards the protection of the rights of the weak, the