

Railway Operations Act

some of the problems. Were we permitted to do that? No. We might have headed off this sort of strike. Many members of parliament could have been considerably more knowledgeable about the dynamics and injustices of this issue if we had had that opportunity to travel.

Obviously, the CNR is not going to let down the CPR. The CN is a Crown corporation. Or is it? I do not understand the niggardly position of CN on wages and, for that matter, pensions. The top pension for a retired CN employee, 65 years of age, is \$228 a month. What is it for Air Canada and the public service? It is \$322. What happens when we talk about pensions for these people? Usually there is talk about some scandal, or the funds having been invested at very low interest rates. Why does CN not want to pay higher wages? It is because they are trying to maximize the return to the bond holders. We do not know who are the bond holders.

The CN is in the unusual situation of being its own transfer agent. We know that 42 per cent of the ballots are held privately. The only other corporation in that situation is Ontario Hydro—and look at the fun they have been having lately. In the past two years, \$59 million was paid to private bond holders. They expect a settlement might cost that or even a little more. Are these shares going to the pensioners or are they going to retired school teachers, the Imperial Bank of Commerce, the Royal Bank, the Banque Canadienne Nationale, TransCanada Pipe Lines, or insurance companies?

The CN might have started originally as a trusteeship to liquidate the Grand Trunk debt and the debts of other little railroads. However, this situation was changed in 1960. We are here to protect the advantages of Canada. I am not sure whether the preoccupation of the CN with its bond market satisfies that intention. Neither will the niggardly, pitiful proposal of a 30 cents increase do that. That is not in the best interests of Canadians: all members of this House should realize that. Members should vote for the subamendment. I hope that some kind of sanity will prevail here sooner or later so that we can get this country back on the rails.

● (2300)

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, there should be no question about why we are here tonight. We are here tonight for two reasons, first, the failure of the government to deal with inflation and, second, the failure of the Minister of Labour to settle the dispute. We are not here to participate in any bidding game. Since the report of the conciliation board was brought down, since the report of the chairman was delivered to the Minister of Labour on July 13, inflation has run rampant in this country and as a consequence my leader, whose remarks were misrepresented by the Minister of Labour tonight, has taken the responsible attitude he ought to take as Leader of the Opposition by acknowledging that fact.

The Minister of Labour talks about the opposition participating in a bidding game. The fact of the matter is we accept the arguments put forward today by the Minister of Transport but we feel the government does not recognize the gravity of the inflationary situation we face. The Minister of Labour failed to take that factor into account. Incorporated in the bill presented by the government is a

[Mr. Rose.]

report of the chairman of the conciliation board. I agree with the Minister of Labour that this is the report which should be before the House tonight because we, as parliamentarians, have no business settling this dispute. We should accept the report of the chairman of the conciliation board because he is supposed to be neutral. But we have a responsibility to protect the workers of this country from the effects of inflation, and this is what we are trying to do by way of our amendment.

We put forward our amendment as a responsible amendment. We go one step further and try to narrow the disparity which exists between the non-ops, the shop crafts and the trainmen. This is why we have "upped the ante" for the second year. We cannot and will not accept the sub-amendment put forward by the NDP because they are in fact engaged in an auction game, and theirs is an irresponsible move.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. McGrath: I submit to you, Mr. Chairman, that we moved our amendment as a serious amendment in the honest conviction that, notwithstanding the failure of the government to recognize its responsibility, we have a duty to protect the workers of the country from the effects of the spiralling inflation we now face.

Mr. Harney: I must admit, Mr. Chairman, I was somewhat impressed by what the Minister of Labour apparently intended to say, but I was stunned by one phrase he used, a phrase which apparently he did not intend to use. He referred to the crisis which is before the country now as being a labour dispute. I submit it is prejudicial to refer to this conflict as a labour dispute. It is a dispute between labour and capital; it is a dispute between employer and employees. It is not a labour dispute. It is most important for members to recognize that it takes two sides to tangle. Surely, if we allow this kind of thinking, as exhibited by the Minister of Labour, to form the presupposition for the reasoning we use in order to settle such disputes, we obviously will always come down much more heavily on one side than on the other.

This is why, in this kind of legislation, which is an aspect of bargaining, we say three things. First, to the railways: You will operate the railways forthwith. Second, to the workers: You will go back to work. Then, to the workers again, we say this: You will go back to work at a certain rate. But because of the attitude of mind built up in so many of us we have failed to tell the railway companies that they must operate the railways at a certain profit and no more. What would be so irrational about doing this? If we can legislate workers back to work and tell them we accept a certain payment, why should we not look very closely also at the operation of the companies, and their profits, and what they are doing in terms of the savings of the Canadian people invested in their enterprises?

I rose, really, to establish just one point. It concerns the right of the House of Commons to make an act of judgment in this matter. The government initiated this act of judgment by calling us all back and presenting us with a bill containing a number of specifics having to do not only