

Air Traffic Control Dispute

if the motion is granted at this point there would not be very much time to debate the matter. On such an important matter I do not want to preclude discussion, and if the hon. member for Prince (Mr. MacDonald) and the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) want to contribute further to the debate on the point of order, I will recognize them. The hon. member for Lapointe.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I merely wish to say that, to my mind, the debate is urgent, the matter is important and we should discuss it today. We must not wait until the strike is under way before trying to settle the matter; better to do so before it starts. In view of the considerable loss of money the strike would involve, and the fact that the government does not seem to be able to settle it, I feel the urgency of the debate is obvious. The other day, an appeal was made, on all imaginable grounds, to solve a certain problem as rapidly as possible. I believe the problem which confronts us today must also be settled as soon as possible. In order not to hamper the development of Canada, such strikes must be prevented. It is therefore imperative that we discuss the matter today.

That is what I had to say. Let us have the debate, so that we may suggest how to settle the labour dispute.

[English]

Mr. David MacDonald (Prince): Mr. Speaker, I will make my remarks very short and to the point. I will point out three matters that I think are different today as compared with yesterday. Your Honour indicated in his remarks yesterday that the matter had not then come to a strike vote. We now know that 94.5 per cent of the controllers voted for the strike. That is the first fact. The second one is that the date has been set as next Tuesday. Some had expected the date to be set in January. The third, and most important fact I think, to be remembered this afternoon is that after seven hours of negotiation yesterday, the controllers in conference by telephone last night decided that on the basis of what they had heard in those seven hours they could do nothing but call for a strike next Tuesday morning at eight o'clock.

I think the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill), when he suggested that discussion here would hurt negotiations going on elsewhere, is playing fast and loose with the whole purpose of the parliamentary process.

If we have not a right to be discussing here, publicly, the issues that face this country, there is something wrong with my conception of parliament and Your Honour's. I think it is something that should be straightened out here this afternoon.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I have asked repeatedly over the last five weeks why we have been deprived of the opportunity of reading for ourselves what the Robinson report has to say. The Minister of Transport was very careful, when circulating this report to the bodies concerned, to keep it shrouded in the utmost secrecy. I think this does not bode well for the kind of negotiations under way at the present time.

In addition, I cannot see how the government can contemplate bringing in legislation of this kind which says, in effect: We have ceased to be able to run our own house and must now pass legislation to force our employees to work for salaries that are below the proper level. I think now is the proper time, and we are in the proper place, to discuss this issue of national and urgent importance.

Mr. Speaker: After the brainwashing to which the Chair has been subjected during the last few minutes it might be very difficult at this point for me to say that I am not in agreement with hon. members who suggest that we should have an adjournment of ordinary business at this time. It is not easy for me to reconcile the opposing views on this question. Certainly, a very strong point has been made by the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr), the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) and by all hon. members who took part in this debate that there should be an adjournment of the ordinary business assigned for today for the purpose of debating this matter of public urgency.

In view of what I said yesterday when this motion was made by the hon. member for Ontario, I am placed in an extremely difficult position today if I say that I cannot accept the motion. There is a seriously complicating factor, namely the notice of motion, with which we are faced. Hon. members know that the difficulty is there. The hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) referred to this question, but perhaps he should more specifically have mentioned standing order 26 (6) (d), which is rather difficult for the Chair to circumvent.

Mr. Lambert: I am fully aware of that. But it is not on the order paper.