

Adjournment

ways of dealing with inflation. I suspect that the government said to Your Honour that it was necessary for parliament to reassemble in order to deal with the rail strike. That was quite proper. However, when at a later date the Prime Minister, with that modesty that ill becomes him, tried to suggest that the House of Commons was called back to deal with the crisis of inflation and economic problems of the country, that was just so much hog-wash. That is what I call it. That that is correct is evident if one looks at the special order paper for Thursday, August 30, and at the special order standing in the name of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro), being an act to provide for the resumption and continuance of operations of railways.

● (1220)

On August 31, the leader and members of my party, the leader of the New Democratic Party and members of the Creditiste party demanded that the government tell us what they were going to do. We did not find out anything. It was only on September 4 that the Prime Minister, with his famous press release and appearance at a press conference which was delayed hour after hour while he and his advisers shifted positions and changed commas, periods and question marks to determine what should be in the statement, indicated the government had any serious intention of looking at the problems of the long-suffering people of this country caused by the failure of this group of extinct volcanoes. That is not the right word. They never were volcanoes, but they are extinct. As a matter of fact, the government House leader had to obtain consent from the Conservatives, the NDP and Creditistes to introduce the legislation which was finally dealt with by this House.

Today, a very indefatigable member of our party, the member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), prodded the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Macdonald). I admit he has had some assistance from time to time from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Because of that prodding, because this session was called and because this House was in being, the minister was finally persuaded to make a statement about veterans' benefits. I would venture to say, and if members opposite are honest they will agree, that if this House had not been called into session, that statement would not have been made.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Béchard: Who called the House into session?

Mr. Lefebvre: That is hypothetical.

Mr. Baldwin: None of the other legislation would have been passed. It was minimal. It is not the kind of legislation that goes to the root of the problem. But we do not minimize this. It has had a useful effect. To some extent, it will alleviate the consequences of the inaction of this government. We approved it and to some extent improved the bills, just as this party improved the labour legislation which was introduced in order to persuade the workers to return to work. If it had not been for the amendment of this party, I am confident that the rail strike might still be in existence today.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Wishful thinking.

Mr. Baldwin: Under those conditions, it has in a limited way been a useful session and has been of some benefit to the people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Before my friends opposite applaud, let them hear me repeat that if it had not been for the actions of this party and the opposition generally, we would not have had the other legislation. There is no question about it. The government was prepared to adjourn this parliament on August 31 when the bill to deal with the resumption of the operations of the railroads was passed. The government had no intention of pressing on with other legislative measures. I can tell by the way members opposite are eyeing me that they know I am right, and approve of what I am saying.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lang: Your eyes are dim.

Mr. Baldwin: For example, that honourable tropical typhoon, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald), who rages and rampages across this country creating havoc and discord, would not have done anything with regard to the energy problems of this country. The minister still has a lot to answer for what he has done. However, what was done was because this House was in session. Members of the opposition, exercising their rights and privileges, challenged this government and something was done.

I have checked through *Hansard*. On August 30, the first day we met, there was no statement on energy from anyone on the government side. A question was asked by a member of this party, the hon. member for York East (Mr. Arrol) about the supplies of gasoline fuel in eastern Canada. The minister responded in his usual negative fashion. The next day, the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) presented a motion under Standing Order 43. However, it was not until Tuesday, September 4, after the legislation dealing with the rail strike had been passed, that any statement was made. That, of course, was the statement by the Prime Minister. It was an ad hoc improvisation, hastily conceived, without any consideration as to the consequences. I am not going to debate the substance of that now. I probably would not be permitted to do so. There will probably be an opportunity to do so later. Let there be no misunderstanding. What the government did was hastily done, ill prepared and without any regard to the consequences. There was not that degree of preparation and consideration that was required.

When the Prime Minister made his statement on September 4, he did not even know whether the controlling of exports of oil would be done by means of a tax or a marketing board. It was only today, when the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources tabled the Ways and Means resolution, that we were made fully aware of the situation. This is a most shocking, improper and unconstitutional way of dealing with an important subject of this kind.