

Maintenance of Railway Operation Act

to act on the basis of any recommendations that may be made by the committee set up in that regard.

I have listened with a great deal of interest to the analysis that was made of the course taken by this government, a course which—as the Minister of Labour (Mr. Starr) said during his remarks—was one that no government would want to take unless, in the opinion of the government, it was the right and proper course to take.

I am going to review, without going into particulars, some of the things that have happened, not traversing the ground so ably covered by the Minister of Labour, but simply to bring into perspective the events as they have taken place.

A conciliation board was set up. The Leader of the Opposition indicates that he is today strongly of the belief that whenever there is a majority opinion of a conciliation board it should be accepted and implemented. I do not have the opportunity of asking him what his attitude was recently when that strike of employees engaged in unloading ships took place in Vancouver. When that strike took place it was carried on for a long period of time, to the detriment of western agriculture and the Canadian economy in general. It was carried on against the majority recommendation of a conciliation board. You cannot have it both ways.

From what the Leader of the Opposition said, I take it that in his opinion when a conciliation board makes a recommendation in the majority it should be accepted and implemented. I do not think his views in that regard represent the thinking of labour leaders in Canada or, if they do, then indeed we would have brought in compulsory implementation of majority recommendations of boards of conciliation, and all the difficulties would be over in so far as labour disputes are concerned. The majority of the conciliation board would recommend and, having recommended, there would be acceptance by both labour and management of that majority report. If that is acceptable, and if the Leader of the Opposition in holding that view is speaking for the party he represents, then indeed he is accepting for his party the principle of compulsory arbitration in all disputes between labour and management.

Mr. Pearson: I merely wish to point out to the Prime Minister that he has completely misrepresented what I said, as he will find out if he reads *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. member differs with what has been said, the proper place to make a correction is at the end of the speech.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I simply took down the words of the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Pearson: I have them here.

Mr. Diefenbaker: *Hansard* will show whether or not the interpretation I placed on the hon. member's words is a proper and appropriate one having regard to what he said.

I realize the difficult position in which the hon. gentleman finds himself now. He dare not accept the only possible interpretation of his words, which I now apply to the words he used. However, he apparently does not want to take that position now for very obvious reasons.

A board of conciliation is simply a body set up with one representative of labour, one representative of the employer and a third representative chosen by the government of Canada. This particular board of conciliation met for a considerable period of time and made certain recommendations. Those recommendations were accepted by the unions but were unacceptable to the employers. The Minister of Labour has pointed out the number of occasions in recent years—I think it is almost fifty-fifty—in which the recommendations of the conciliation board have not been accepted.

I have endeavoured throughout, as have the Minister of Labour and the other ministers involved, to maintain a complete neutrality so that neither side can say we are endeavouring to bring about any agreement between the parties by coercion. We met with them. There was an alternative suggestion yesterday to which reference will be made later on—an alternative suggestion by Mr. Gordon along the lines of the suggestion made by the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher)—that there must be standards in so far as transportation companies are concerned. I will deal with that on another occasion. There was a report; there were recommendations. But it was not a government board of conciliation. It was a board of conciliation set up under law to which the third party, the chairman, was appointed by the government as is always the case on the request of the parties. I wish to make that very clear.

The railways refused to accept the recommendations. All through the years this government, and members of this government when in opposition, have pointed out the injustice which was being imposed on various parts of Canada by the inequity resulting from discriminatory rates. It is true enough that there have been subsidies, as the hon. member for Port Arthur said. There are subsidies in the maritime freight rates legislation; there are subsidies covering that area of