

St. Lawrence Pilots Work Stoppage

felt he had gone too far and I have also indicated to the hon. member for Laurier that I feel it would be proper to permit the Minister of Transport to comment when the hon. member finishes.

(Translation):

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, there is no point of order at all. The minister evidently is not aware of the rules—

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. member would complete his statement. The point of order has been disposed of.

(Translation):

Mr. Chevrier: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are three important points which are apparent from the minister's statement. First, pilots and shipowners—

Mr. Speaker, may I ask you to call the hon. members to order? It seems to me—

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: Order. No contribution is being made to the conduct of the affairs of the house if hon. members make it difficult for the member who has the floor to carry on his remarks.

(Translation):

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the house have listened closely to the minister's statement and I think—

An hon. Member: Because it made sense.

Mr. Chevrier: I think it is only proper that a member speaking on behalf of the opposition should be listened to in the same way.

In conclusion, I should like to say that three points of capital importance are involved in this dispute. First of all, this strike is greatly prejudicial to the Canadian economy; second, it is a cause of serious inconvenience to travellers; and last, but most important, this dispute endangers the safety of navigation on the St. Lawrence.

I say, with all due respect to the minister, and I think he will agree, that he failed to take those three points into account when he met with the parties.

In view of what has been said, I urge him to bring once again the pilots and shipowners together so that they may reach an agreement.

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: Would the minister wish to comment now or to wait until I have heard the member for Port Arthur?

Mr. Balcer: I can comment now, Mr. Speaker.

26207-1—170

(Translation):

Mr. Balcer: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Laurier raised three points about which I am in full agreement with him. That is why I met the shipowners and the pilots yesterday. I asked the pilots to return to work and I asked the owners to be more flexible and try to understand the situation.

I should now like to reply to the statement made by the hon. member for Laurier, to the effect that I treated the pilots with arrogance. I do not think there has ever been a minister of transport as patient with the pilots as I have been and I should add that the pilots have never been so well treated as they have been these last three years.

Yesterday I had the opportunity of listing about 60 items of things we have done for the pilots. I think my predecessor and myself have always treated the pilots with fairness.

The only point I represented to the pilots yesterday is that they will be the first to suffer from the strike, which is illegal; they are doing damage to themselves. I think they exaggerate.

I asked them to reconsider the situation, to modify their claims to make them reasonable, and to try to reduce them to a minimum, taking into account not only their personal interest but that of the public at large. On that we parted. My officials met the pilots and discussed with them. As far as I am concerned I am prepared to meet them anytime. I asked them to consider that point.

As far as the 24-hour notice is concerned, I received word from the pilots that the strike was scheduled to begin Thursday night. Now, I received their telegram Wednesday night, and the shipowners received a similar telegram at 5.15 p.m.

This is too short a notice and I submit that in view of that short notice, several people have suffered a great deal of inconvenience, which they would not have had to suffer if notice had been given earlier.

I sincerely believe that the owners and the pilots should consider the problem calmly and try to reach an agreement in order to contribute their share to maintaining that feeling of optimism which now prevails in the economy of the country, and thus work together for the prosperity of Canada.

(Text):

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): Mr. Speaker, it is very apparent that the co-operation the minister seeks has been made somewhat more difficult by the fact that he has