

Air Traffic Controllers

dispute, and the government asks the House to be the executioner.

Mr. Fraser: Right on.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): When parliament takes from people their basic right to free, collective bargaining and their right to withhold services, it has the responsibility to give them something in exchange. In every piece of legislation I have seen in the last 15 years ordering workers back to work, parliament has given, in exchange, an independent arbitrator or arbitration board.

In the case of the railway workers we said, in the legislation, that the offer made by the employer would be the floor below which the arbitrator could not go in making his recommendation.

What are we doing in the present case? The government is asking parliament to impose on the government's own employees terms and conditions the government has concocted, without regard to a reference to an impartial, independent body. This is the negation of everything the Liberal party has professed to stand for when, across this country, it has spoken of its faith in collective bargaining and the right of workers to withhold their services.

The point at issue in clause 5, to which my leader moved an amendment, is simple. As the President of the Treasury Board admitted this afternoon, the issue comes down to one thing, whether increased wages which may have to be paid on the basis of a reclassification to which both the government and the air traffic controllers agreed would come under the ceiling of the Anti-Inflation Board guidelines.

The minister said this afternoon that the government had worked out what the Anti-Inflation Board would be prepared to approve and had therefore put that in the legislation. I submit that the government has no more competence to foresee what the Anti-Inflation Board will decide than you or I have, Mr. Chairman. Who are they to presume what the Anti-Inflation Board will decide? Parliament set up the Anti-Inflation Board on the assumption it had the competence and experience to make these decisions. It is not up to the government to make these decisions, and then say what the Anti-Inflation Board would do.

Who can tell this House what the Anti-Inflation Board will do? The Board has changed some of the agreements the government entered into with its own employees. That shows you that the government assumed wrongly what the Anti-Inflation Board would decide. The Board announced that maximum increases of \$2,400 a year would be paid to professional groups, but last year the average increase over the previous year for professional groups was \$4,900, and in some categories, \$7,200. Could anybody foresee that the Anti-Inflation Board would make that kind of decision? Could anyone foresee that it would allow the salary of the president of Kaiser Resources Limited to rise by \$60,000, not \$2,400? Was anyone to assume that the Anti-Inflation Board would make such a decision? Yet here is the government saying that in its wisdom, in its omniscience, it knows what the Anti-Inflation

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

Board will decide, and it is therefore writing into the legislation what the employees will get.

The Prime Minister, if the press reports him correctly, says that we have no right to pass the buck. Neither the government nor any other employer has the right to pass the buck to the Anti-Inflation Board. But the fact is that again and again the government has signed agreements which, when they went before the Anti-Inflation Board, were altered. That has happened with other employers, which is understandable.

Mr. Fraser: And which was expected.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Of course, that is precisely why the Anti-Inflation Board was set up. But I defy anyone to study the regulations, study the board's decisions, and prophesy with exactitude what the board will decide. In clause 5 the government is putting itself in the place of the Anti-Inflation Board.

Mr. Fraser: And the arbitrator.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): We were told in October, 1975, that the government was to set up an anti-inflation board which would be free to make decisions, independent of the government. Now the government says that it will make that decision, and it decides what the Anti-Inflation Board would do in the case of a certain proposal. Perhaps the government does not trust the Anti-Inflation Board's judgment, which is some reflection on its appointees to the Anti-Inflation Board.

So long as the Anti-Inflation Board is in existence, the government has no right to assume what the Board will decide. It has no right to put itself in the place of the Board and say, "We know in advance what the Anti-Inflation Board will do; therefore, parliament must pass legislation to put into effect a collective bargaining agreement which has not been referred to that Board." The hon. member for Vancouver South and the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby both tried, by way of amendment, to persuade the government to change clause 5.

Without doubt, the workers will go back to work once this bill passes. A number of items in the agreement are not in dispute. But we and the Conservative party have said, in our two amendments, that the matter of wages should be referred to an impartial body and that the government should not force parliament to impose on the government's own employees a collective bargaining agreement devised by the Minister of Transport. This is a much more important principle than some members seem to realize.

● (2230)

In the broadcast "CBC Sunday Morning," the Minister of Transport said that we should be giving serious consideration to whether we should allow strikes in the public sector. If the Minister of Labour and the government have in mind removing the right to strike from public servants, what is going to take its place? From then on we are going to have public servants' wages, hours and conditions of labour determined by