

I do not propose to deal with that situation, but in view of the fact that the minister has mentioned it we on this side will put on the record during this debate exactly what happened in 1950, and, indeed, the difference between the action taken then and the action that is now proposed. This action is being taken in consequence of a break-down in negotiations. As the Prime Minister said, as reported on page 292 of *Hansard* of November 29:

I may say that if as a result, it becomes clearly apparent—

As it is, unfortunately.

—that there is no hope of agreement, the government will then take it that the possibility of a continuance of the collective bargaining process must regretfully be regarded as ended.

The collective bargaining process, according to the Prime Minister, has ended, so the government has introduced legislation to deal with the situation. In introducing this legislation the Minister of Labour had a good deal to say about the inadvisability of compulsory action by the government or compulsory implementation of a majority report of the conciliation board. What we are faced with in this legislation is compulsory action, compulsory implementation of a minority report. But before we on this side talk about the immediate past and, because the minister brought it up, the past of a couple of years ago, particularly in respect of a labour dispute in British Columbia which I can assure the hon. gentleman we have not forgotten, I want to say at once what the Liberal party would have done had we had the responsibility of dealing with this particular situation in the particular circumstances with which we are confronted today.

In the first place, I think we would have been more successful than the government has been in settling this dispute through discussion and agreement.

An hon. Member: Remember 1950.

Mr. Pearson: I remember 1950 very well. I point out, because Mr. St. Laurent has been mentioned more than once in connection with that dispute by the Minister of Labour, that the press reported in these words on what Mr. St. Laurent did at that time.

An hon. Member: The *Winnipeg Free Press*?

Mr. Pearson: No, this was the *Montreal Star* carrying a Canadian Press report which should commend itself to the hon. gentleman:

Adroit handling of the strike situation by Prime Minister St. Laurent won words of praise from **different labour leaders.**

Maintenance of Railway Operation Act

The handling of this situation by the present government does not seem to have won any words of praise so far from labour leaders.

An hon. Member: What date is that?

Mr. Pearson: The date is August 31, 1950 and this account is from the *Montreal Star*. The report goes on:

"We appreciate the action fully; everyone should be satisfied" said Percy Bengough, president of the Trades and Labour Congress. Pat Conroy, secretary treasurer of the C.C.L., voiced the opinion that the Prime Minister had been "extremely fair all through the piece".

If, however, we had not been successful in our intervention in settling this dispute by negotiation or agreement, what would we have done in that situation after negotiations between the two parties had broken down? I shall be happy to put on the record what we would have done. First, we would have introduced legislation which would have made this strike unnecessary, because we agree with the Minister of Labour that it is impossible to contemplate the unhappy consequences of a railway strike at this time. Second, we would have based that legislation on the report of the conciliation board, because we do not believe that parliament should compel men to continue to work for wages which are lower than the conciliation board found to be fair and reasonable after a full and careful inquiry under the independent chairmanship of a superior court judge appointed by the government for this purpose. Third, we would not provide for any subsidy at this time, because we believe the railways to be in a position to pay the increased wages for the period until the royal commission on transportation makes its report—the Prime Minister has said that that will be by the end of March—and until the government is then in a position to review the whole problem of railway finances in the light of the actions which have been taken. That is how the Liberal opposition would have prevented this strike and in doing so have given justice to the employees without, in our view, prejudicing the position of the railways.

Another difference between our proposal and the government's bill is that under this bill, until May 15 next at the very earliest, the government is forcing the employees of the railways to do without an increase in wages which the conciliation board found they were entitled to receive and in respect of which provision had been made for the increase to be met in stages. The Minister of Labour has put the details on the record. We, on the other hand, would have required the railways to pay the wages which have