

After Recess

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Hon. PETER HEENAN (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I rise to say that I am in favour of the repeal of section 98 of the criminal code; in fact I never did think there was any necessity for it. I believe there is even less reason for having it now, because recently the government enacted a measure for the peace, order and good government of this country.

I regret, Mr. Speaker, that in the discussion of this measure we have drifted away from the merits of the case. I think we might very well decide whether or not section 98 should remain on the statute book without making personal attacks on the hon. member who introduced the measure. We must remember that bills similar to this passed the House of Commons on five different occasions, and at one time, if my memory serves me aright, a similar bill failed to pass the Senate by only two or three votes. Many statements have been made with respect to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Woodsworth), all designed to make him appear more radical than other members of the house and attempting to connect him with some radical movement in this country. All I can say is that the hon. gentleman's constituents have answered such charges many times. They have shown the high esteem in which he is held in the city in which he resides, and I have personal knowledge of the great support he receives from many labouring people throughout Canada. Any attacks such as have been made during this debate will not detract in the least from the regard held by many people throughout Canada for the hon. member.

I feel sure, Mr. Speaker, that the citizens of Winnipeg would much rather have the incident of 1919 considered closed. I do not believe they are desirous of having that deplorable strike, which we all regret, discussed at every opportunity, especially when it leads to so many hon. members expressing views which are entirely erroneous, with many of them founded on rumour rather than on fact. To-day the hon. member for Saskatoon (Mr. MacMillan) read some quotations from a red covered book, and apparently he was quite satisfied that the statements he made were correct. If hon. members of this house wish to obtain accurate information they can do so from the files of the government. I know there are a number of files in existence in the different departments; for instance, there is a very large file in the Department of Labour.

Reference has been made to the part played by the One Big Union in the Winnipeg strike. I think I know something about that strike; I happened to be running into Winnipeg at the time, and I used all my persuasive powers to keep the men whom I represented from going on strike. I was in close contact with the situation, and I know that the One Big Union was not in existence at the time the Winnipeg strike occurred. I know the strike was the result of a dispute between the metal workers of Winnipeg and their employers. The dispute started in the first instance just as every other strike starts; the metal workers were denied the right of collective bargaining. Then, after the strike started, it spread until, as has been said, it became practically uncontrollable. The strike committee have been blamed for many things with which they had nothing to do. Servants in the hotels; domestic servants; the T. Eaton staff, and even policemen and firemen went on strike. This was no fault of the strike committee, which was merely endeavouring to maintain the principle of collective bargaining, which principle had been advocated by the government of Canada in an order in council passed on May 1, 1919.

I think we should try to see the good points of hon. members of the house instead of trying to find out bad things about them. If hon. members look up the files they will find a telegram which was sent on June 21 by Mr. Andrews, who was representing the government in Winnipeg. That telegram was addressed to Mr. Meighen, then Minister of the Interior, and it stated that the strike committee did all they could to prevent the parade which led to the riot in which one man lost his life. The strike committee could not have been so very bad if the representative of the government could write such a eulogy as that. Hon. members will also find that the strike committee suggested terms of settlement which were regarded by the employers as very reasonable. These would have been accepted had it not been for a committee of citizens and representatives of the Dominion government who interfered because they did not want to see the strike settled; they wanted to see it broken. Everyone realizes why that was in their minds at the time.

Hon. members will find also that the government of the day managed to get along very well without section 98. A number of men were arrested, and when the then Minister of the Interior was acquainted with that fact he wired Winnipeg questioning the