

*Legislation Respecting Railway Matters*

for a period of six months railwaymen's right to strike, that is until May 15, 1961, during that six month period, negotiations went on between employer and employees, and early in May 1961, an agreement occurred between the parties.

In 1966, the same problem arises with much more serious and disastrous consequences for Canada and the Canadian people.

In addition, the threat of a strike—of an inflationary strike-crisis, and everyone is talking about it—the strike or strikes are the result of circumstances, of a political and economic situation which exists in Canada today. What will the government do to solve efficiently once and for all that conflict which has been dragging for almost 20 years? The leader of the opposition in 1960 was the present Prime Minister; he stated then, at pages 446 and 447 of *Hansard* I think:

I do not intend to try to block or delay passage of this bill at this time by any procedural move. However, before the vote is taken I intend to set out briefly but I hope clearly the sole but significant difference between the government and the Liberal opposition on this bill. We agree with the government that there should be no railway strike at this time.

The same remarks were made last night by the Leader of the Opposition.

We agree with the government that there should be no railway strike at this time. We agree with the government that it has become necessary to prevent this strike which otherwise would start tomorrow morning. We have already made that statement.

We do not agree with the government that the workers involved in this matter should be compelled by law to continue to work at wages below the standard accepted in comparable occupations where strikes are permitted, which standard has been used in negotiations previously.

It is the present Prime Minister, then leader of the opposition, speaking.

Our position is that in compelling the men to remain at work, the bill should also compel the companies to pay wages that a conciliation board, with a chairman appointed by the government, found to be fair and reasonable.

The present Prime Minister said that when he was leader of the opposition.

However, if the government persists in maintaining the bill as it is, we cannot vote to force men to work for wages judged to be substandard by the Milvain conciliation board set up by the government. Therefore the government and its supporters will have to take exclusive responsibility for this unjust method to prevent a strike, which strike, however, we also believe must be prevented at this time in the public interest.

[Mr. Caouette.]

That statement was made by the Prime Minister when he was leader of the opposition, about a similar conflict at the time when the present Leader of the Opposition was prime minister, on December 2, 1960, as reported at pages 446 and 447 of *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker, today we hear the same thing from the Leader of the Opposition, those very words that were used in 1960 by the present Prime Minister.

We find here on page 345 of the official report for November 30, 1960, what the minister of labour of the time, the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr), had to say about a piece of legislation providing for the maintenance of railway operation:

At this point, I would refer to the words of the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, then prime minister, when dealing with a similar situation in this House in 1950.

That was ten years before.

Mr. St. Laurent spoke against the background of a railway strike which had been in progress for nine days. That strike he described as a national emergency. If continued over a lengthy period of time, he told the house then, it would bring the economy of the nation to a complete standstill.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, is being brought forward in order to prevent a repetition of a similar national emergency.

That was the then minister of labour, who is now the hon. member for Ontario in the official opposition, speaking. Now, we find that this crisis is repeating itself, this time still more acute. And the then minister of labour said:

In 1950, the emergency was allowed to happen. In 1960, it will not be allowed to happen.

Really, it is edifying to hear today the Leader of the Opposition tell us exactly the opposite of what his assistants said at that time.

The first effect—

continued the former minister, Michael Starr, —of a strike, at this time would be to throw out of work some 170,000 railway employees. This figure would be doubled by the resulting unemployment of those who depend upon the railways as a means of economic subsistence.

In 1950, for example, in addition to the railway workers unemployed as a result of the strike, some 70,000 workers in other industries were laid off and, in 1960, the figure would be substantially higher. The direct and indirect consequences which would flow from a strike at this time would be disastrous in their magnitude.

That was the minister of labour of that time speaking. This is even more true in 1966. How is it, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Ontario then said this crisis should not occur