

other two. The men asked Mr. Hays what he meant by 'as soon as possible'. They said: 'Do you intend to take all the men back?' Mr. Hays said: 'Yes, as soon as possible'. 'What do you mean by that? Do you mean next week, or two weeks?' They wanted to change these words or have them left out altogether. In fact, I think that was the first suggestion they made—to leave out the words, and said that if these were left out they would accept. But Mr. Hays would not agree. Well, to make a long story short, before we broke up we had got this far—that the men would be willing to let these words go into the agreement if Mr. Hays would give them a definite meaning. First they wanted the words left out; then they wanted a definite meaning given to them; in the third place, they said: If you give them a definite meaning, we don't care whether they are in or not. And their last offer was—and I have Mr. Garretson's words written on the other corner—'Satisfy Sir Frederick and Mr. King as to the meaning of: 'As soon as possible.' They said: We will accept your first, provided you satisfy Sir Frederick and Mr. King what these words: 'As soon as possible' mean.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. Hear, hear.

Mr. KING. The Minister of Militia (Sir Frederick Borden) is here, and I think he will bear me out.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. Quite.

Mr. KING. In other words, on that Saturday night, an agreement had been reached between the two parties. The only question remaining was the meaning of the words: 'As soon as possible.' And the men stated they did not care whether the words were put in or left out, so long as something definite in the way of an assurance was given them as to their exact meaning. They went so far as to say: You will only have to satisfy Sir Frederick and Mr. King, and we will accept that as an assurance. It was not the government making an agreement for the men, or the government making an agreement with the company, but the company and the men making an agreement together, and doing so under terms in black and white, but in regard to the meaning of one of which terms Sir Frederick Borden and I were to stand as witnesses. And we stand as witnesses at the present time. But Mr. Hays would not give a meaning to these words on Saturday night, and because he would not give a meaning to them the strike lasted through Sunday and Monday and Tuesday, for it was not until Tuesday that we could get Mr. Hays to give a definite answer. Hon. members opposite state that we ought to have used

Mr. KING.

the big stick. Did we not use it? I will tell my hon. friends how it was used.

When I left on Tuesday Mr. Hays had not given that assurance. I gave Mr. Hays to understand that unless he gave some meaning to those words 'as soon as possible,' I would see that the people of Canada knew why the strike was not settled, and that it was because he had not defined the meaning of those words 'as soon as possible,' the whole Grand Trunk Railway system was being tied up, and I gave him virtually six hours in which to decide whether or not he would give a meaning to those words. I left him on the understanding that I would come to Ottawa, and would see that the whole transaction from beginning to end was made public in order that the men and the government should not be put in a false light before the country and that the blame should fall where it was due, that there were these three words to which he would not give a definite meaning. I would never have made this statement public if it had not been that so much difficulty has arisen over these words, and that the government is being blamed in a way in which I do not think it should be. Had Mr. Hays followed out, as I think he should have followed out, the agreement at an earlier stage there would not be any occasion to mention this now. Mr. Wainwright came up to Ottawa on a train about the same time as the one on which I came and as vice-president of the Grand Trunk railway he gave me an assurance in the presence of two of my colleagues here that the president of the Grand Trunk railway would consent to giving to these three words 'as soon as possible' the definite meaning of three months which was the time Sir Frederick Borden and myself said we thought would be sufficient. That was exactly the position, and Mr. Hays yielded at this stage in view of a knowledge of the pressure that was being brought to bear on him by the government, and for no other reason. That strike would have continued for weeks and months probably, no matter at what cost to the country or loss to the men, but for the pressure which was brought to bear in that way. Just here I would say a word in behalf of Mr. Wainwright. If any man in this whole transaction is entitled to credit it is Mr. Wainwright. He had a very difficult position to maintain, but I think it was his good counsels and good actions which more than anything else were responsible in the last analysis for the company seeing the wisdom of accepting the settlement.

Hon. gentlemen opposite have endeavoured to place on the government the responsibility for the manner in which one of the terms of the agreement has been carried out. As I have said, the terms of the settlement stated that as soon as possible