

Maintenance of Railway Operation Act

house would accept that position. The point which the Minister of Veterans Affairs makes, namely the point of order that the substance of the amendment rather than the form is in effect a negative or an expanded negative and therefore not in order, I would think would be too late. If he objects to the amendment as it stands I shall declare it out of order completely, without argument on the other point and allow it to be moved again. I would think that would be a fair course. But as to the argument that it is an expanded negative, the opportunity having been available to make that argument at the time when the amendment was placed before the house, I would think objection should have been taken at that time. The minister has the alternative. I am waiting for the instructions of the house as to whether to accept the amendment in this way or to ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr. Diefenbaker: We will always act in a way that will bail out the opposition, and we will agree to that procedure.

Mr. Speaker: Then the Prime Minister has the floor.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It just shows that finally an amendment can be achieved provided there is between the government and opposition that spirit of co-operation which we are most happy to give on this occasion.

Mr. Pickersgill: And which we gave 24 hours ago.

Mr. Diefenbaker: If the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill) can maintain his silence, I would appreciate his doing so. These sotto voce interruptions that are heard by the reporting staff and which I find difficult to follow seem to be part of a propensity in the exercise of which he might restrain himself.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, it is very rarely that I rise on a question of personal privilege in this house, but the Prime Minister has made what I think is a rather unpleasant reflection upon my conduct as a member of this house. I trust that the Prime Minister made those remarks in the same tone of levity in which I am accepting them.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I used the most pleasant manner of admonition that I could possibly command.

I want to begin first by referring particularly to the remarks of the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher), who dealt with this question in a manner that indicated he had given considerable study to the problem and realized all of the difficulties and anomalies.

[Mr. Speaker.]

He pointed out that the unions with whom we have been meeting in the last few days are responsible unions. I can say immediately that there can be no denial in any way of his views in that regard. I want to emphasize that throughout the entire negotiations at which I was present, there was on the part of Mr. Hall—who conducted the negotiations entirely by himself on behalf of the representatives for whom he was acting as chairman—a manner that is entirely in keeping with the best traditions of labour negotiation and discussion.

I realize that there are strong feelings expressed by men employed on the railways regarding conditions under which they are operating and have operated for many years. The hon. member for Port Arthur spoke of his close connection with railwaymen. I, too, have, through the years had the most close and intimate relationship with many union and labour men in the transportation field. Indeed, the relationship has been such that of all the friendships I treasure, none have meant more to me than those I have formed both personally and professionally throughout the years with these men.

One of the major objections that I have heard raised through the years has been the fact that turn-around benefits and comforts have not been properly provided for the operating unions, that pensions were broken or interfered with in so far as their term was concerned during the 1930's, and that many of those who have been pensioned off from the railways—and there are today many such railway employees—find themselves in a position where, because of the breaks that took place during those years, they are being, in their opinion—and with justification—unfairly dealt with.

I have on many occasions in this house dealt with these situations, and this year I intend to ask the committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines, when set up, to undertake an investigation of one of the major grounds of objection on the part of railwaymen, that of the break in pensions. I will ask for this matter to receive the fullest investigation by the committee when set up, to the end that, where injustice exists, changes may be recommended by the committee in that particular, as well as in those turn-around comforts and benefits for which railwaymen have asked for so many years. Where there are injustices, I want to see an opportunity given to the men themselves to appear before a parliamentary committee, to the end that in the presentation of the wrongs which they allege parliament will become fully conversant with those wrongs and unfairnesses and will be in a position