

instance, has no relation to him. When I first became a member of the Senate I wrote a letter to my old friend the late Ian Mackenzie, criticizing some action he had taken regarding labour matters. Taking the liberty of friendship, I wrote him with the consciousness I suppose, that I was a new senator. In that letter I laid down the things that I thought ought to be done, and I received the following reply: "Your letter most interesting. Please remember you are in the Senate and I am in the House of Commons". The point is obvious. He was not disagreeing with all, or perhaps with anything, I said, but he was conscious of the limitations upon a minister in the House of Commons. We have often been told that one of the principal reasons why the Senate was set up was to protect minorities. I would submit to you, gentlemen, that the Senate also exists for the protection of majorities against the power of minorities.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mr. Farris:** I think that is one of the great duties we have. I have talked to many of my friends about speaking on this question, and they have said to me "Why not let sleeping dogs lie?" That may be the part of wisdom, but I am not at all sure that it is the part of duty at this time. I feel that a sense of obligation rests upon us, to state frankly, and without fear or hesitation, our views on this question. I am not suggesting that this session is the time to legislate. I fully appreciate the fact that legislation ahead of public opinion is harmful, not beneficial. We have all seen evidence of that in the matter of prohibition. I do not think there is any doubt in the world that prohibition effectively and completely enforced would be a good thing; but I happened to be an attorney-general at a time when the people were all in favour of enforcing it against somebody else, but equally in favour of trying to get a drink for themselves. I know how impossible it was to make it work. I once said that if there was ever another plebiscite on prohibition in British Columbia, the people should be asked: "(1) Are you in favour of prohibition? (2) Will you pledge yourself individually to abide by the law if it is passed?" If the plebiscite were based on those questions there would be no danger of the prohibition vote ever carrying.

So I am not now discussing this question with the idea of having a law introduced immediately for action at this session of parliament; but I believe that now is the time to start thoughtful consideration of what must sooner or later be done in this country. We must see to it that the public are properly educated and, in due course, arrive at a

proper conclusion. My honourable friend, the leader opposite, (Hon. Mr. Haig) said yesterday that he thought it well at this time to leave this question alone. There are reasons why that may be so; but my judgment leads me to overrule that objection and come to a contrary conclusion: I have stated that the warning for the future comes from what has happened in the past—a group of respected men in the community, led by responsible leaders, going out on what I think was an unjustifiable strike.

I am going to ask honourable senators to give me their consideration while I enumerate the reasons why I think the strike was not justified; not why the claims of the railway workers should not have been made, but why the drastic action of a strike should not have been taken when it was.

There were two points directly at issue. The first was a demand for an increase in wages of 7 cents an hour. There was one group that wanted an increase of 10 cents an hour, but I shall confine myself mostly to discussing the 7 cents an hour increase. The second essential point at issue was the demand that after the 7 cents an hour increase had been granted, the working hours of the men should be reduced from 48 hours a week to 40 hours a week, with 48 hours pay.

In this connection there has been a lot said about the high cost of living, which is something everybody knows exists. I want to stress, however, that there would have been no controversy if the men had confined themselves to the need of increased wages in order to meet the present high cost of living. This is a very important point, because the two questions are so interwoven in the arguments that you cannot tell when one is being talked about and when the other. I read in this morning's edition of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* that the operative branch of the railways is now conferring with the railway officials, demanding a very substantial increase in wages without any reduction in hours of work. I say that if those men who went on strike had been concerned only with an increase of 7 cents an hour, they would have got it and there would have been no controversy and no strike. The record is clear as to that. It equally follows that if wage increases alone had been considered there would have been no controversy. The railroads would have granted them at once.

Confined to the wage issue, the question of the high cost of living does not appear at all. If the 40-hour week has any relation to the high cost of living it would work the other way around. We had a lesson in what the honourable gentleman from Prince (Hon.