

Legislation Respecting Railway Matters

down its bills at the earliest possible moment, and let us know what is being proposed to restore order, and not spread disorder nor impose economic or government dictatorship on the workers.

No. But let the government bring down its bills so that we made consider them. That is why we have been called. It is clear that at the same time we will be touching upon the question of inflation while we are discussing these bills, because the bills are directly related to inflation.

But, Mr. Speaker, to enable the government to bring down its bills and to enable us to discuss them according to the facts, then we will be in a position to discuss at greater length the details, the points and the suggestions of the present government.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I say that we will let the government introduce its legislation at the earliest possible moment. This does not mean that we will be giving a blanket approval to the government proposition; not at all. It means, however, that we are anxious to bring an end to this railroad strike, to achieve a settlement because at the present time neither the executives of the Canadian National or of the Canadian Pacific, nor the union leaders are footing the bill for this strike. The strikers are the railroad workers themselves, and the farmers who are left with produce that cannot now be sold for lack of transportation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we hope this strike will come to an end at the earliest possible moment and that is why we are anxious for the government to bring down its legislation so that we may consider it and arrive at beneficial results for the economy of the country as a whole.

[English]

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, we have been called to deal with a national emergency, an emergency that has arisen in the form of a national strike but behind which is a far greater emergency affecting the whole economy and the entire operation of our railroads and transportation system. However, it would be a futile waste of time to delay in dealing with the first crisis. Every day that the trains do not run adds to the burden on the economy and to the hardship caused to innumerable innocent people whose livelihood is dependent upon reliable transportation. The trains must get back into operation and parliament should hear immediately what steps the government proposes to take to solve the immediate crisis and the long-range problems behind it.

[Mr. Caouette.]

• (3:30 p.m.)

Unfortunately, there are third parties who are suffering as a result of this strike. There are the travellers, the fruit growers, the farmers, business people, students and citizens generally of the two island provinces and the entire nation. This has forced the reconvening of parliament. Most important of all is the hardship this strike is inflicting upon those people with fixed incomes who have no way of fighting for their own needs.

In my opinion no one person or group can be held solely responsible for the state of labour unrest in Canada. The demand for more material benefits and the accompanying decrease in responsibility for one's fellow man have been fed by the advertising media which foster dissatisfaction as a spur to sales, by labour leaders who know of no other way to hold their jobs than to offer their men more wages and fringe benefits, by management which has boasted of the wonders of automation in raising productivity, and by a government which has promoted the theme that all the welfare needs of the people should be met by state schemes.

In such a situation it is not surprising that neither labour nor management are prepared to take realistic action but turn to the government to make the difficult decision for them. Such a decision faced the government last spring during the Quebec longshoremen's strike and the threatened strike of seaway workers. The government muffed it and we are meeting in emergency session to pay the price. Compulsory arbitration may be unpalatable to the unions but when their own representative on a conciliation tribunal agrees that there can be no settlement short of government intervention, what other solution remains? Regardless of what has happened in the past and whatever the weaknesses in government action have been, the government must take a strong line now and call upon responsible people in the country to support it. The call has come to us to deal with legislation and we want to see that legislation. We give our assurance of co-operation in dealing with it because it is the national interest that must be considered. If parliament had been called prior to the beginning of the strike, in our opinion we would have been discriminating against the railway unions and their workers. In addition, this action would have been contrary to the basic right of collective bargaining and the right to strike. This is of particular significance in view of the fact the union