

matters with a view to avoiding trouble. But, so long as hon. members in this House are prepared to look only on one side of this question, so long as they are prepared to assume that there is only one party in the struggle, and only one that is absolutely right, while the other is absolutely wrong, then I want to say that those hon. members utterly fail to grasp the facts of the situation. I want to tell the hon. member for North Norfolk that any individual, or any member of this House, who does not recognize the rights of labouring men to enter into voluntary association, is as big a demagogue as the man who would adopt unconstitutional methods to accomplish his purpose. There are unreasonable men in the labour movement; yes, there are unreasonable men in the capitalist movement; and what is wanted is proper government authority to deal with these extreme people, and to provide that the business of the country shall be conducted for the benefit of the whole community.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL (Hon. Sir William Mulock). The question introduced has assumed a somewhat wide range. I do not propose to discuss the labour question in the abstract, the fringe of which has just been touched by some hon. members; I would rather confine my few observations to the question that led to this discussion. The trouble in Montreal to-day is not new. It has been growing for some time. The two parties evidently have been organizing, and have entered upon a contest of strength. Before the outbreak of hostilities the government endeavoured to prevent them. I am sure that hon. gentlemen are all most desirous that the interests of the country should be paramount in a matter of this importance. I am sure that no hon. gentleman would desire to make any political capital out of a question such as this. I say this with all frankness and in all sincerity. Whatever views may exist, I will say this, though a party man, that I hope the day will never come in a Canadian parliament when the members will make a football of the labour problem. It has challenged the efforts of the best governments and the brightest minds the world has ever known, and it is not yet solved. We have a task before us, and we will be better able to solve it if we keep the one object in view of the common interest of the country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before this trouble began the government sent for representatives of the two parties. You will understand the delicacy of the negotiations, in view of the strained relations that exist and have existed for some time. You cannot with success plunge into the midst of a struggle between two parties who are excited and determined. But so far as our private interviews, influence, advice, and pressure could go, they were exercised to induce, if possible, a settlement and to re-

Mr. SMITH (Vancouver).

move all causes of difference. Our advice was refused. It was deliberately given, it was deliberately taken into consideration, and it was deliberately refused.

Mr. MONK. May I ask the hon. gentleman who the representatives sent were?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I assume in advance that my hon. friend (Mr. Monk) is most anxious for a satisfactory solution of this difficulty, and he will quite understand that, to go into particulars and to give names, would jeopardize the negotiations that have continued up to this moment. At no time since the trouble began has there not been present in Montreal endeavouring to make overtures to and to establish relations with both sides a gentleman of high standing and in close touch with the government. We have not only had him in daily and constant communication with us, but we are in telegraphic communication with him, and even since this debate began the right hon. leader of the government (Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier) has received telegraphic despatches reporting the state of affairs. The hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) asks a natural question, but I am sure it would only strike him as equally natural for me to say that I doubt if anything would be gained by giving away, if we have the right to do it, the confidences of which we are the recipients on both sides.

Mr. INGRAM. Would the hon. Postmaster General say whether the advice was deliberately refused by one or both sides?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Ingram) will, perhaps not press me too far upon that point. He has the same object that we have in view and it is extremely important that the government should be at all times able to enjoy the unqualified confidence of disputants in labour troubles, not only on this occasion but on all occasions, and if the government's influence is to be for good we must preserve the unqualified confidence of disputants no matter how wrong either of them may be. I say that not desiring to withhold anything, but for the reason which I am assigning here. The hon. member for Centre Toronto urges us to do something. There are only two things that can be done in regard to labour strikes. If you had a law by which you could by force compel men to go to work you could invoke such a law. This is a free country and there is no such law upon the statute-book. I do not think that any hon. gentleman would propose to put such a law upon the statute-book. There is one other method and that is by friendly conciliation and by bringing the pressure of public opinion to bear. In regard to either of these steps there is a right time and there is a wrong time. There is a time when intervention would be effective; there is a time when it would be a failure. It is difficult to strike the right time. It does