

Labour Conditions

From personal experience I know something about this archaic attitude. Before I became a member of this house I was involved in this sort of thing, on the side of unions and working people. The opportunity has presented itself for some personal reflection upon the issues involved. This kind of thing cannot properly be settled in the heat of a battle to arrive at a collective agreement. This is the kind of thing that can quite properly be the subject of an inquiry and the fact-finding analysis of a commissioner. If there is to be any real and permanent solution resulting from the findings of such a commission there must be an acceptance on the part of the parties involved. This will not result from an agreement obtained by threats jammed down the throats of the participants to the dispute.

● (9:10 p.m.)

That is the only way in which this kind of change can be brought about in a way which will tend to lessen the incidence of industrial disputes, unrest and dissatisfaction. I regret that instead of dealing with a bill of this kind we have not had from the Minister of Labour a bill which would implement in a broad way some of the principles enunciated by Mr. Justice Freedman in his report. Those kinds of recommendations and principles are applicable not only on the question of railway runthroughs but to other labour areas, and legislation based on them would become in effect a charter for the basic approach to negotiations in dealing with the rapidly changing industrial society in which we live.

We have had hints that the government has the report of Mr. Justice Freedman under consideration, but there is no suggestion in this bill that the commissioner in bringing in his binding report is to be activated or motivated in any way by the kind of principles enunciated by Mr. Justice Freedman.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I could ask the hon. gentleman a question. Has he read the terms of reference of the industrial inquiry?

Mr. Barnett: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pickersgill: Has he read the section relating to job security?

Mr. Barnett: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and having read them I stand by the remarks I have just made. As I understand them, the terms of reference do not give any general policy direction to the commissioner in respect of

making his report. They do set out the points he is to take into consideration in arriving at his findings, but they do not include the kind of terms of reference that I understand are inherent in the report of Mr. Justice Freedman.

I do not know whether the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) agrees with me, but I was trying to point out that there would have been a much happier situation in this house if we were considering and discussing the principles contained in the report of Mr. Justice Freedman, rather than being asked to adopt this kind of shotgun legislation to force a settlement that, for all we know, may simply mean that upon the termination of the agreement the whole matter will erupt into an open sore that will have been festering for the entire period of the agreement.

I do not suppose that consideration of this bill will be the end of this matter. I hope that the government, if they feel they made a commitment in the heat of these negotiations in respect of action along the lines the bill proposes, will consider that they have honoured that commitment sufficiently by having placed this proposal before parliament and brought the bill to the point of second reading. But I would plead with the minister to at least agree to the kind of compromise proposal set out in the amendment now before the house. If this motion is adopted I submit it will do at least two things. It will have the practical effect of allowing the kind of discussion and representations referred to by some hon. members who spoke earlier in this debate. I suggest it will also enable the members of this house, through the committee, to be acquainted with and have knowledge of the findings of the commission before the matter came back to the floor of the house for final adjudication. It might be that if those findings were available and it could be established to the satisfaction of the members of the industrial relations committee that there were reasonable grounds, within the life of the agreement, for accepting the proposals, the house when it came back might be disposed to allow the passage of this bill, with the understanding that its effect was limited purely to the particular situation in respect of which the bill has been introduced.

If we allowed the bill to go through without this type of examination I submit we would be opening the door to this sort of approach being used as a quick and easy solution to every other problem that develops and appears to be serious. We will create the