

Air Traffic Control Dispute

purports to say what this gentleman was asked to inquire into. My colleague has the order-in-council. Would the hon. gentleman read what the government asked the judge to do, not his interpretation of it?

Mr. Douglas: That point of order is about as silly and nonsensical as most of the interjections in which the minister indulges. But I will say this: The minister's own views are set forth in a letter which he sent to the association and in which he said the government recognized the importance of achieving a solution to this problem, and the importance which must be attached to the findings of the special investigator. The government, he said, would make a report immediately available to C.A.T.C and would give immediate consideration to its findings.

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the hon. gentleman quote the whole letter?

Mr. Starr: Obey the rules.

Mr. Douglas: The air traffic control personnel were so seized with the minister's sincerity that, in advance of the findings of Judge Robinson's report, they agreed to accept his recommendations. But they underestimated the Minister of Transport. If the report had been favourable to the government, the minister would have looked upon it as coming from a mediator. But when the recommendations were more generous than the President of the Treasury Board was prepared to accept, the government said Judge Robinson was not a mediator, not a conciliator, but just an adviser to the government.

Nevertheless the minister's own letter makes it perfectly clear that he was appointed to find a solution, and he brought down recommendations which seemed to hold out the hope of a settlement. It is significant that the air traffic control personnel should have indicated in advance that they would accept the recommendations immediately. The minister has had this report since November 7. Five weeks have gone by.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Douglas: The minister is continuing to drag his feet. He refused to act on the judge's report. He has given the employees of his department no satisfaction as to the action he intends to take. It is only now, on the eve of a Christmas recess and faced with the prospect

of a strike commencing next Tuesday morning, that the government is beginning seriously to bargain with its employees—and bargain, let me say at the same time as it is telling them it intends to introduce legislation to prevent them withholding their services.

If any other employer bargained with a club hanging over its employees' heads, the government would describe it as blackmail. But knowing it has these employees entirely at its mercy, and having rejected the report of its own appointee, the government now bargains, telling them at the same time: If you do not take what we give you, you will be compelled—

Mr. Starr: That is what they mean by free collective bargaining.

Mr. Douglas: —to continue to work on terms set down by the government and by parliament.

Mr. Graffey: Another triumph for the right wing.

Mr. Douglas: This is the government's concept of free collective bargaining. Mr. Speaker, it is not necessary for the government to put legislation on the order paper. It is not necessary to introduce legislation to prevent this strike next Tuesday morning. All the government have to do is accept the recommendations of their own appointee, Judge Robinson. All they have to do is to say that the salary recommendations which were put before them are acceptable to them.

For the government to hide behind the flimsy excuse that they must wait for the remainder of Judge Robinson's report, which does not deal with salaries and does not deal with wage schedules, is simply an attempt to stall these negotiations for a longer period of time. I believe that once they know the facts the people of Canada generally will take a very dim view of the government's continued vacillation. This government has not bargained in good faith with these employees. If the government wants to prevent a serious crisis facing the Canadian people, all it has to do is to accept Judge Robinson's report, recognizing that he made that part of his report in advance because he knew that this was the crucial question which had to be settled. I want to tell the government that if it does not get a settlement, and get it very soon, the people of Canada are going to be highly indignant at the procrastination and gross incompetence which the government has displayed in the handling of this whole affair.