

Legislation Respecting Railway Matters

arbitration. Objection is taken to compulsory arbitration and yet, Mr. Speaker, in all fields of endeavour, we turn to compulsory arbitration. When we do not agree, we call on courts of law and accept verdicts. We have to. It is accepted at all levels of society; why would it not be accepted in the labour field, especially when the Commonwealth is concerned, when it has to do with strikes which affect the economy of a whole country and when things have come to such a deadlock that the parties cannot agree.

Otherwise, who will propose the solution, who will find the formula of agreement? I think that in such circumstances the government must assume its responsibilities, adopt measures which, though they may seem drastic, are hoped for today by the Canadian people.

I think that throughout Canada people are getting ready to condemn those who have wasted the time of parliament since it started its deliberations, those who did not understand that it was an emergency situation which might be disastrous. I think I just said that all Canadians are sending to the Canadian parliament an S.O.S. which should be heard by all. And here we take advantage of that situation to indulge in political partisanship, to create difficulties for the government. We will have contributed a little more, Mr. Speaker, to reduce the respect which the people feel for the Canadian parliament, the respect it should have. Otherwise where are we going, Mr. Speaker?

Therefore, I would like to call on the goodwill of all my colleagues and ask them to listen carefully to the voices coming from their ridings. Let them feel the necessity of taking immediate steps to end that strike and to enable those workers, who are on strike and who will not get their regular weekly salaries, to get them as soon as possible under reasonable conditions. I think that the government is giving them reasonable guarantees, and if the government does not keep its word, we will have all the time needed to blame it and to make it clear how it failed to keep its word, Mr. Speaker.

• (7:00 p.m.)

For the time being we must agree to a sacred union and place our confidence in the government, vote them their bill to bring the strike to an end and then, tackle all the gaps and deficiencies in our labour legislation; we will grapple precisely with that problem of the increase in the cost of living. We will

[Mr. Mongrain.]

tackle all the major problems submitted to the house since yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Maurice Allard (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, we have before us a bill calling for the return to work as soon as the legislation is passed, an increase in wages of 16 per cent for two years and compulsory arbitration. I do not intend in my remarks to take the tone taken during this debate by some hon. members who worked hard at setting forth a list of grievances concerning either the slowness of the present government or the 1960 Act which prevented the railway strike, or the 1950 measure bringing to an end a first general railway strike.

What counts, Mr. Speaker, is that we must not get bogged down in the winding paths of yester year, but rather look to the present and consider for the future more efficient structures and legislations in the field of labour and economy. As far as the recent dockers strike, the present railway strike and a possible postman strike in the fall are concerned, it is obvious that we must improve labour legislation, and administrative and judicial organizations. Bill No. C-230 before us sets forth three main purposes:

First, suspension of the rail strike; second, interim wage increase of 16 per cent over two years, for the railwaymen; and finally, compulsory arbitration. During the time at my disposal, I wish to elaborate a little on the bill's triple objective.

The first objective: suspension of the railway strike. Striking is not the normal means of establishing social justice. We must hope that another social measure will take away, as in the case of war, all reasons for its existence. Whether it be a classical strike, as is the present railway strike, a sit-down strike, a management strike, warning strike, slow-down strike, political strike, revolutionary strike, professional or sympathy strike, whether it be any kind of strike. A strike must be used as a last resort with due regard to social justice and Christian charity.

The state may intervene in a strike as protector of the common good. It is true that the wage-earner owns his job. If the wage-earner, by going on strike, decides to temporarily withdraw his services and if the state intervenes to force the wage-earner into going back to work, the state is legislating on a right of ownership, on an actual right belonging to the wage-earner, I agree.