

*Legislation Respecting Railway Matters*

session at Ottawa to consider a most serious situation, paralysing to the Canadian general economy.

Indeed railwaymen are on strike, national railways have gone out of operation, and from all sides we hear people say that the government should have summoned parliament earlier, that the government does not know how to cope with its responsibilities etc. The government was right in letting employers and employees, through their own means of negotiation, seek an understanding which would benefit both the railwaymen and the Canadian economy as a whole. Had the present Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) been at the head of the government, I dare him to say he would have done better under the circumstances. He himself would have let employers and workers, through their bargaining agents, try in every way to find a solution, to come to an agreement. But it is easy to lay the blame on others.

Mr. Speaker, following negotiations, a conciliation board was appointed and failed as well. This railway employee issue is not a separate one; it is an all-embracing problem. All sectors of the economy are affected, and are in the same situation. The conflict between the railway employees and the national railways did not start today, or even two months ago. In fact, back in 1950, under the St. Laurent administration, certain problems had already arisen. In 1960, under the Diefenbaker government, difficulties also occurred. Both in 1950 and in 1960, why did not those who were at the head of the nation live up to their responsibilities in anticipation of possible events in 1960 or 1966?

Mr. Speaker, we are presently summoned to examine this very alarming situation and the government requires members to make a decision that will end this strike which ultimately will be detrimental to the strikers themselves.

They are the ones who are losing wages, and the farmers and all the social classes in Canada are losing through such a strike.

But, Mr. Speaker, under the pretext that the government must fight inflation, parliament is recalled and two bills will be submitted to the members later on. We have no idea of what is in them. Do they deal with compulsory arbitration or with a definite policy to get the railways to deal adequately with their employees? Do they contain appropriate and reasonable solutions to help the Canadian workers in general? We do not know. But I

know one thing, Mr. Speaker, namely that the railway workers and the textile workers are not the only ones on strike in Canada; we have also had farmer's strikes against some provincial governments. As a matter of fact, we have had all kinds of strikes and the most important one so far in Canada, which happened many times, is that of the financiers when they impose credit restrictions and force the Canadian people to live in misery. In the case of those strikes, the government never recalled parliament so that steps could be taken to put finance at the service of the Canadian people, human beings which include the railway workers, industrial workers, miners, settlers, farmers of all classes of society.

Mr. Speaker, the government does not call us back to deal with those strikes, but we are called back to discuss the impossibility of the railways to grant a 30 per cent wage increase. We are now complaining about inflation and its dangers but, Mr. Speaker, the dangers of inflation are not recent; they existed many years ago when, for instance, the government is deprived each year—the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) is well aware of it—of \$1.25 billion in interest only on the national debt. That is inflation, Mr. Speaker. The 11 per cent tax on building materials, that is inflation, Mr. Speaker, and the government is responsible for that.

What is the government doing about inflation? Absolutely nothing. On the other hand, the workers are asked to accept low wages which barely enable them to make ends meet, wages which barely enable them to live decently in a country like ours.

We know that the cost of living is exorbitant, everyone knows that we must do something, but why always do it at the expense of the working classes? That does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that I support the strike which is now on in Canada. No, because I have the deep personal conviction that in the whole world, strikes have never settled labour problems. Usually, and generally, the end of one strike marks the beginning of another. And those who pay for the strike are not the labour leaders who give the strike order, but those who work, the workers themselves. On this point, I call to witness the Minister of Manpower (Mr. Marchand) who knows all about this strike. When has a labour problem been settled by a strike? Never.

I have no intention, Mr. Speaker, to speak at any length on this question at this time, because I insist that the government bring