• (9:30 p.m.)

I have explained the reason the government chose to provide a provisional settlement for 1966 in the expectation that the parties ought to be given a further opportunity to negotiate and mediate. The right hon. gentleman has to appreciate that approach because in 1960 he ordered the men back to work empty handed.

Mr. Diefenbaker: How much is the government offering today?

Mr. MacEachen: He ordered the men back to work empty handed and he said: We are placing our total reliance on collective bargaining and on mediation, and his confidence was justified.

Mr. Diefenbaker: How much are you offering today?

Mr. MacEachen: His confidence was justified because negotiations reached a settlement of that dispute. We have provided, as we stated was our policy during that earlier debate, for an interim settlement on the basis of the conciliation board award and left the remainder of the issues, including a settlement for 1967, to the parties. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition attacks us for having taken the wrong course. What is he asking us to do—give nothing as he did?

Mr. Diefenbaker: How much was offered this evening by the Prime Minister?

Mr. MacEachen: My purpose in participating in this debate tonight, Mr. Speaker, is to assert what must be obvious to any person who examines this bill and examines the reports of the boards, that 6 per cent is not the final settlement: It is a provisional interim settlement for one year.

An hon. Member: Then it is 6 per cent?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

An hon. Member: Six per cent here and 30 per cent there.

Mr. MacEachen: I am not embarrassed by that kind of comment because I began by using this 6 per cent figure produced by the Leader of the Opposition.

May I continue my remarks by referring to a second aspect of the problem, namely the pattern of parliamentary intervention in previous disputes. Honesty, I am sure, must compel us to admit that when parliament intervenes in the settlement of a dispute the processes of free collective bargaining are abridged. There is no doubt about that. When parliament must act to reach a settlement, as it has done on three former occasions the processes of free collective bargaining have failed, have broken down, resulting in parliament stepping in.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Will the minister answer a question?

Mr. MacEachen: I suggest that on the basis of a careful examination of all the past precedents, and there are only three of value to us—unless we refer to the Skeena precedent, which never became a full-blown precedent—they teach us that this bill succeeds as well as if not better than any other that has been introduced in the house in reducing to a minimum the impact of interference in collective bargaining, respecting the rights of the workers, because it is based on an appropriate judicial finding.

It is instructive to look at the 1958 and 1960 bills brought forward by the previous administration. First, with respect to the wage aspect, the 1958 bill introduced either by the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr) or by the Leader of the Opposition prescribed a wage settlement of 8 per cent. The union men had been on strike for 68 days. If I reproduced the words and the mood of the Leader of the Opposition I could only say they failed to act—for 68 days they failed to act.

One should read clause 4 of the bill which prescribed an 8 per cent settlement, in spite of the fact that the chairman of the conciliation board in that case recommended a settlement of 25 per cent, union representatives 31 per cent and the company 17 per cent. The government chose 8 per cent because the stewards union, one group in the bargaining complex, settled for 8 per cent.

That bill provided for compulsory arbitration by governor in council. I do not know what conclusion to draw from the arguments advanced by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas) and the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis). They both argued that, once there is compulsory arbitration, negotiations fail.

Mr. Fulton: Will the hon. minister permit a question?

Mr. MacEachen: We have only two cases to illustrate this, one of which proves the hon. gentlemen right and the other of which proves them wrong.