

*Airline Firefighters Strike*

Simply because it is your own community, or province, or city you cannot endorse or even condone an illegal strike because it happens to be in Vancouver but be appalled by similar action in Montreal. Are we advanced to the point that we are now saying, "Let us have one region for British Columbia, let us have a region for the prairies, one for Ontario, one for Quebec and one for the Atlantic provinces"? I do not think hon. members really want that. What we should endorse is the national bargaining unit concept. That exists, and it is the Public Service Alliance. To deviate around the Public Service Alliance and deal with 200 well-meaning people who are part of it is to undermine the trade union movement. That is hardly in the best interests of those same firemen when two or three years hence they come back to the bargaining table.

The whole concept of unionism is unity. It is a voluntary movement. If you are going to have two or three firemen saying that they have no faith in their negotiators, the Public Service Alliance, and that they want to negotiate directly with the Minister of Transport themselves, they are really saying that they have no faith in the organization to which they belong. That is more important even than the monetary question in the final analysis. As the Minister of Transport has said, if the complaint is injustice as far as salaries are concerned, surely the arbitrator or conciliator or representative of the government and of the Public Service Alliance should be able to reconcile matters. Public opinion would demand it.

That is the purpose of our democratic system. The people of Vancouver and the people of Canada would certainly tell the government in no uncertain terms if these people were being unjustly treated, if we the government were taking advantage of their inability to strike long enough for economic reasons. On the one hand the hon. gentleman is saying that these men have a grievance, and because they have a grievance they are entitled to use their bargaining power and walk off the job—

**Mr. Fraser:** I did not say that.

**Mr. Mackasey:** On the one hand he is saying, "Run out there and put them back to work because of the inconvenience." You cannot have it both ways in a democracy. The law is the law, and the law says this is the way it must be done. You cannot walk off the job, no matter how just or unjust your case may be.

It is the same thing with nurses in the maritime provinces. Why should they be paid less than those in Ontario and British Columbia? I never accepted the regional rate principle. Speaking as an individual member, I have always felt that if you want to have national bargaining and wage rates, go toward the top. It costs just as much to live in the maritimes as in British Columbia. That is my opinion, for what it is worth. Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I cannot condone an illegal method of settling this type of injustice.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired. I did allow him an extra minute and a half because of the questioning.

[Mr. Mackasey.]

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make the following points to members of the government. No one in his senses can justify or condone a group of Canadians breaking their bargaining pattern, breaking the law, if you like, although that sometimes does happen in these things. But I do not think that anyone, including the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand)—whose sincerity I do not for a moment question—has really got to the point which gives rise to this kind of situation. If you are going to have national rates, and I am personally totally in favour of it, I regret those areas in the public service that now have regional rates.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lewis:** I regret that there are registered nurses working for the federal government in Halifax receiving about \$1,800 a year less than registered nurses working for the federal government in Victoria, or Vancouver, or Toronto. I regret that a dockyard worker in Halifax is making \$100 or \$150 or \$200 per month less than a dockyard worker in Victoria. I am in favour of national rates. But if you are going to have national rates in a way which will avoid the kind of grievance that has arisen in British Columbia, those rates must be close to the top rates and not close to the bottom rates, otherwise you are going to have trouble.

I agree entirely with the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey) that the objective has to be to raise the rates of the people of Newfoundland to those of the people of British Columbia. You cannot have a national rate that will be at the top of the regional rate, I agree, but it should be so close to the top that the people who have to accept that rate do not feel aggrieved, do not feel that an injustice has been done to them. They are ready to take something smaller in British Columbia for the sake of having the people in the Atlantic provinces or Quebec or Saskatoon or Regina get a higher rate than they would otherwise get. When you permit—this is where Treasury Board is so at fault—a national rate to place the people in the higher wage are in a position of real disadvantage, they would be angels if they did not react, Mr. Speaker; and we are not any more angels than they are.

The federal government ought to be a model employer, but in many circumstances Treasury Board acts like the most reactionary employer in this country. That creates the problem. One of the things that always creates problems is delay. If it were possible to get these negotiations going so that it looked as if they were coming to a successful end prior to the end of the contract, that is, April 1 or March 31, so that the people knew that their wages would be raised \$1,000, \$2,000 or \$3,000 per year, or whatever the settlement might be, and we cannot settle it here, then we would be in a different situation. But when nothing happens, when the municipal firefighters get an increase on January 1 of this year and the airport firefighters lag behind to a point where they feel really disadvantaged, then trouble arises.

As a matter of fact, one of the reasons I think the firefighters in British Columbia are mistaken in what they are doing is that in my reading of the situation Treasury Board would like nothing better than to have regional bargaining right across the country in every com-