

Mr. Stanfield: Because in my judgment we are not here to effect a settlement.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: We are here to put a bill to the House that will get the railways operating on a fair basis.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Your bill is not a settlement.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Chairman, in clause 5 of this bill we come to the nub of this legislation because it sets forth the financial terms upon which we will require some 56,000 non-operating workers to go back on the job pending future compulsory arbitration. The government is forcing parliament to go through a ritual dance which would be a charade if it were not a tragedy.

For 25 years in this country there has been no genuine process of collective bargaining for railway workers. The railway workers have had hanging over their heads, like the sword of Damocles, the knowledge that if they went on strike the government of the day would convene parliament and force them back to work. The railways have known that, and have used that for their own sinister purposes.

● (2230)

The railways have never bargained in good faith. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, who is the hon. member for London East, himself has said that the railways have not in this case bargained in good faith. They have always known that if they dragged their feet and delayed reaching a decision, the government would call parliament together and force the workers back to work.

What we are facing in this country at present is a contrived national crisis in which the railways have deliberately brought about a situation where the public is being deprived of essential services, where the economy is being dislocated, and where the public is demanding that the strike be brought to an end by some means or other. That is why this entire debate is a charade, because the real process of free, collective bargaining does not exist in this case.

Mr. Reilly: Hear, hear!

Mr. Douglas: The minister said that there will be certain implications if the amendment or subamendment are accepted. I submit there will be implications if they are not accepted, because the railways will know once again that if they refuse to bargain in good faith in the future, and precipitate a strike, the workers will once more be sent back to work at a basic wage which is acceptable to the company, even if it is not acceptable to the workers. If the minister, who says he wants to preserve the process of free collective bargaining, is sincere, the best way he can demonstrate that sincerity is by putting into this bill a figure which will be acceptable to the employees, and the railways will not be so quick in future to precipitate a

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situation which will require parliament to send men back to work.

Why does the government not do this? We listened to a fine demonstration of rhetoric on the part of the Minister of Transport. This proved the adage that no one is so vehement and enthusiastic as a recent convert to the establishment. He asked, "Who knows what is a fair settlement?" Tonight the Minister of Labour got up and said, "We are not here to make a fair and just settlement." He said he does not know what is a fair figure at which to send the men back to work.

I point out that the Minister of Labour has in his possession all the records of the hearings of the conciliation board and all the advice of the officials of his department, of the conciliators and of the mediators; yet he does not know what is a fair settlement. No wonder his intervention was such a disaster when he tried to bring the parties together. Both the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Labour say, "We cannot negotiate this matter on the floor of parliament." The Leader of the Opposition even said that we cannot draft an agreement. Mr. Chairman, this is precisely what we are doing, and the government will not deceive anybody with this kind of rhetoric.

What is the government doing? It is asking this parliament to take from a group of men the right to withhold their labour, and to send them back to work at a figure set by parliament. The only other recourse available to those men is to go to an arbitrator, who is unknown, and who will make the final decision as to what their incomes will be for 1973 and 1974.

Is there any other group in Canada whose income will be dependent on a bill passed by this House and on the decision of a single arbitrator? Will any arbitrator set the price of cars sold by General Motors? Is anybody going to say what people should sell a television set or radio for? Is any arbitrator going to decide what the fees will be of lawyers, doctors and insurance agents in this country? Is any arbitrator going to decide what interest rates will be charged by the banks?

An hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Douglas: Under this legislation the government is asking parliament to send men back to work at a figure that is not acceptable to them, and to leave the final disposition of their income rates for 1973 and 1974 in the hands of an arbitrator. I submit that if the government is to ask this parliament to deprive a group of workers of their basic rights in a free society, we have an obligation to put into this legislation a guaranteed minimum that will at least be acceptable to them. It may not necessarily be all they want, but it ought to be acceptable to them. We must then hope that the arbitrator will give them some additional income in order to compensate them for having lagged behind steadily for the last 15 or 20 years.

The Minister of Labour says that we are now engaged in a bidding contest. This is not a matter of bidding. The question which faces this committee of the whole, this parliament, is twofold. First, what is a minimum, just figure which ought to be given to these men in return for compelling them to go back to work?

Mr. Railton: Do you not want them to go back to work?