

Air Traffic Control Dispute

to settle this affair. This announcement and the whole matter of negotiations that have been going on for a great many months has about it an aura of mystery. I say this quite frankly, because there is no question in the minds of those who have received the report and studied the situation that this is so, particularly in the light of the union's accepting the recommendation of the conciliation officer appointed by this government, and the reluctance of this government to accept the reasonable recommendations—

Mr. Benson: On a question of privilege—

Mr. Starr: —of that report. Certainly there is a mystery about it.

Mr. Benson: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister is rising on a question of privilege.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege: There was no conciliation officer, as such, appointed.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Starr: This whole affair is shrouded in mystery. The statement made today by the minister and the statements made yesterday by other ministers about this matter certainly have an aura of mystery about them, especially when they tried to place the judge they appointed into some category that seems to be lost. Certainly the judge was an arbitrator, or he was acting in the manner of an arbitrator.

An hon. Member: Do not be foolish.

Mr. Starr: He dealt with matters affecting the union. Every person who is interested in union affairs in this country, except the government which appointed him, knows exactly what the role of the judge was. The minister in his announcement today says that everything is going well, that meetings have been held, that meetings will be held tomorrow, tomorrow evening and on Friday if necessary. At the same time the government is preparing legislation.

An hon. Member: They have a club to wield.

Mr. Starr: Why is this, if things are going so well? In a very simple situation such as this a settlement should have been reached today, and reached without legislation. All the government has to do is accept the recommendations of the judge it appointed. The union has

[Mr. Starr.]

agreed to them. No glossing over of any pretended progress being made can deter us in parliament from our responsibility of again later this day moving the adjournment of the house, so that parliament may have a say in advising the government about what should be done in this matter.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): The fact that the air traffic control personnel of the Department of Transport have notified the government they intend withholding their services, commencing at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, December 20, means that this country faces a serious crisis.

An hon. Member: The government does not care.

Mr. Douglas: We face the prospect of having every civilian airport in Canada closed during the Christmas season. It is difficult to understand why the government has procrastinated on this matter for so long. The discussions with this group regarding salaries have been going on for some 18 months, without reaching any settlement.

Mr. Woolliams: They need time.

Mr. Douglas: Last May the association asked the membership for a strike mandate and the government was so advised. The Minister of Transport, in order to head off a prospective strike, appointed Judge John B. Robinson to serve as a commissioner under the Public Inquiries Act. The President of the Treasury Board says the judge was not a conciliator that he was not a mediator. What was he? He was a commissioner appointed by the government. For the Minister of Transport to say, as he said yesterday, that the judge was merely an adviser is the sheerest nonsense. You do not appoint an adviser under the Public Inquiries Act. He was appointed to ascertain all the facts, to look into the complaints of the traffic personnel that comparable employees in the United States received over 50 per cent more in salaries and had better working conditions.

• (2:50 p.m.)

Mr. Pickersgill: I am rising on a question of privilege.

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Transport rises on a question of privilege.

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps I should say I am rising on a point of order. The hon. gentleman appears to be reading from a paper which