

Committee on Railways and Shipping

the air transport board one of the agencies to be investigated by this committee?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Hees: What I say, Mr. Speaker, is, let us have competition in our air services in Canada. Let the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) stop protecting his sacred cow, T.C.A., and let us have all-out competition between T.C.A. and these lines that have applied to compete for passenger and freight traffic across Canada. As I have said, T.C.A. has nothing to worry about provided it can produce better and cheaper passenger and freight services. If it can, it will maintain its position. If it cannot, it will lose some of the business and, as in all competitive enterprise, the buying public will benefit. T.C.A. will benefit because it will then have to improve its services and efficiency to keep pace with those who are taking business from it. That is the essence of the competitive system. That is what makes business on the North American continent in particular such an outstanding example of what free enterprise can accomplish.

Let us have competition in our air services in Canada and put T.C.A. to the test to prove it is as good as it is claimed to be. If it is, then the public of Canada will be very well pleased.

Mr. J. C. Van Horne (Restigouche-Madawaska): Mr. Speaker, the labour situation on the C.N.R. has been getting progressively and increasingly worse. Before coming to the labour situation itself, however, I should like to say just a word more or less in support of and in agreement with all those who have risen during this discussion and spoken with regard to the basic \$25 per month pension paid to some retired people of the C.N.R. How this government can reconcile this basic payment of \$25 per month for pensions for some people on the C.N.R. is, I would say, beyond the comprehension of every hon. member of this house. Hon. members on all sides of this house agree—and they have expressed their agreement—and maintain, as do we all, that \$25 per month paid to these pensioners is totally inadequate and unfair. Based on today's cost of living, this \$25 represents possibly \$10 in present-day value, taking into account the increased cost of living. Why this government insists on making these pensioners live in penury and hardship is beyond the comprehension of any Canadian citizen who has given time and thought to the consideration of this problem.

On several specific occasions Mr. Donald Gordon has stated in effect that he was out to squash the unions on the C.N.R. and to put them in their place.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It has often been ruled in this house that public servants, such as the one to whom the hon. member has just referred, are not to be accused in words such as those in which the hon. member has just expressed himself. I am not asking the hon. member to withdraw. But having said what he has said I want to ask him, as a new member, to bear this in mind as he goes along, in case he wants to fortify his criticism, and to remind him of what the precedents have been.

Mr. Van Horne: I am glad you mentioned that matter, Mr. Speaker. This government is co-operating to an extent which is known to all the members and to all the employees of the C.N.R. by making sure the unions are denied rights which are guaranteed to unions under provincial legislation in every province of Canada.

Then again, this practice and this system recently adopted on the C.N.R. of having maintenance and repair work done by contract is undermining the whole structure of unionized labour on the C.N.R. It is true that in many instances these same employees who are laid off from their regular employment are given employment by the contractors who have contracted to do the maintenance and the repair work. But these employees who are forced to leave their regular employment and go to work for the contractor automatically lose the long-fought-for benefits which their unions have succeeded in obtaining for them over long years of negotiation. Then again as to these employees, once they are rehired, in many cases there is no longer a question of pensions because the contractors have no unions. There is no longer a question of extra pay for overtime. The employees are forced to accept reduced wages. They are obliged to start all over again at the bottom of organized labour and work up.

If this system were saving money for the C.N.R., we could possibly say that there was some justification for it. In my riding alone, during the past two weeks two major wrecks have been caused. Investigations have revealed that, in the over 15 wrecks that have happened in the past nine months in my riding alone, soft bed tracks were permitted to exist. Maintenance was not carried out in accordance with the long-established practice for good maintenance of railway tracks and so on. The cost of repairing those wrecks, not to speak of the danger to life and limb,