

Railways and Shipping Committee

speech from the throne, for instance. Therefore I say to you with respect that in the past this discussion has been allowed.

What I am proceeding to do now is not to enter into this subject in too much detail, but I would like to make a number of general references not only to the Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships but more particularly to Trans-Canada Air Lines. Of course if you rule me out of order I will accept the ruling, and that will be the end. I submit that in the past discussion has been allowed with pretty wide latitude. It would seem to me that I am in order in discussing the operations of those three government-owned enterprises.

Mr. Hees: If I might speak to the point of order also, I think the hon. member for Laurier is right when he says that in the past there was a pretty wide-ranging debate allowed on this motion. As far as I am concerned, as minister of the department, I would be perfectly willing to have any of these matters discussed as fully as hon. members would like to discuss them.

Mr. Benidickson: I am glad to hear those remarks by the Minister of Transport, because it just so happens that yesterday and last evening I was looking up some of the past debates when similar motions were before the house. I found that when the Prime Minister himself was a private member of the house he frequently made remarks of this kind on this motion, particularly with respect to pensions of C.N.R. employees. He pointed out that he was not likely to be a member of the committee and urged that the committee, when it undertook its deliberations, should look into increases in the pensions of C.N.R. employees. In similar speeches the Prime Minister, when he was a private member, indicated that he felt the question of competition with Trans-Canada Air Lines and other things should be looked into.

An hon. Member: Do two wrongs make a right?

Mr. Speaker: I thank hon. members for reminding me of what has been done before. I must say I am not too happy about the idea of having duplicate debates. When this committee reports, the subject matter of its investigation will be before the house and open to debate and in the interval it will be debated before the committee. It is obviously the sense of the house today that some latitude should be allowed; therefore I am quite content, by leave of the house, to proceed along the lines suggested by the hon. members and minister.

Mr. Chevrier: I would not want you to think, Mr. Speaker, that I would wish to

delay the establishment of this committee, because we on this side of the house support the motion. I shall try to be as brief as possible. Unless there are other members on this side who want to speak on this motion, I think, I shall be the only speaker; but I cannot assume that that will be the case. I thank the minister and my colleague the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Benidickson) for their assistance on the point of order, and the very understanding attitude of Mr. Speaker.

May I go on and say that to those of us who sit on this side of the house it is disappointing that nothing, or very little, has been said during the course of this session about the activities of the Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships, particularly by those who were so strong in their criticism of our action. What is extremely disappointing is that after all this criticism, which I mentioned earlier, was made by members who now sit on the government side, there should be this abrupt termination of the services of the Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships—again the minister may feel that I use a harsh expression—and the complete capitulation of the government in the face of difficulties which could have been and could still be overcome. Those who have followed the fortunes of the Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships can feel only a tremendous sense of disappointment that the government should have done so little to maintain this very important service to the West Indies.

I would now like to turn to another matter, sir, before I resume my seat, and it has to do with the activities of Trans-Canada Air Lines. At this time I want particularly to draw attention to the complete silence of the minister on this very important matter of Trans-Canada Air Lines services in Canada. I would like to put on record the attitude the minister adopted when he sat on this side of the house. He was very critical of the operations of Trans-Canada Air Lines at that time. I would like to quote from the debates of 1956, volume 2, page 1868, and I will overlook the interjections in the quotation I shall give:

Mr. George H. Hees (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, the thing I have never been able to understand is why the government insists on maintaining this T.C.A. monopoly after about 15 years of operation because any businessman knows that in any kind of business where competition is allowed to have full sway, both the public and the competing firms benefit. Everybody wins. The public benefit because they get cheaper prices and better service. The competing firms benefit because they are forced to remain efficient and to keep on improving their product and their service. Where monopoly is allowed to hold sway, as it has been for 15 years in the case of the T.C.A. then the organization