

Supply—Transport

while observations about the Canadian Pacific pension plan may be relevant to the estimates of one of my colleagues, by no stretch of the responsibilities of the Minister of Transport does it come in any way within the purview of my rather wide administrative responsibilities. I wonder whether the hon. gentleman would be willing, as was the hon. member for Winnipeg North, to save this part of his remarks for the appropriate minister.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chairman, I was in the chamber when the minister replied to the hon. member for Winnipeg North, but I am emphasizing two aspects of this matter tonight. The first is that unless the government does something about the present policies of the C.P.R., there will be no alternative but for the government to take it over. It seems to me that the government has some immediate responsibility—and the Department of Transport is involved in this matter—in the over-all picture to make sure that the C.P.R. lives up to the obligations it has to the Canadian people and the country as a whole.

I was mentioning this point as it relates to pensions only to emphasize the fact that these policies are having an extremely demoralizing effect on the employees of the C.P.R. This is bringing us to a point of strain in labour relations which could well, as it goes along with other problems that are today facing the employees of the railways, reach a point where we could be facing before our centennial year a national rail strike. One has only to read the newspapers day by day to understand that this threat is coming closer and closer.

What I am saying is not dealing with the Canada Pension Plan as such, but is only emphasizing the fact that the Department of Transport has a very specific responsibility in this connection. The minister of this department carries a responsibility as far as transportation and public carriers in this country are concerned. I am convinced that the government is not doing what it should be doing at this time to make sure that the critical situation which is now developing is stopped.

In a matter of months we face our centennial year. The demand for passenger traffic on the trains across this country will be greater than ever before. This heavy demand will also apply to other forms of transportation. It seems to me that the C.P.R. should be following the pattern that has been set by the C.N.R. to upgrade the passenger service and prepare for the tremendous traffic load that

will occur next year, and which I am convinced will continue after 1967. I say this, Mr. Chairman, because I believe we have entered that part of the cycle following a period where rail passenger traffic has not been as profitable as it should have been, will begin to come back into its own.

It is interesting that the policy which the C.N.R. has followed has been adopted by a public corporation when it should have been the private corporation that took this lead. The C.P.R. is certainly failing in its obligations to the Canadian people. Therefore I would emphasize in these remarks the need of the governments taking action as it relates to the Canadian Pacific Railway. Before leaving the question of the C.P.R. I would again emphasize this point to the minister. If the C.P.R. is deliberately asking for take-over, then it should consider its responsibility to the people of Canada as this responsibility relates to assets other than tracks, right-of-way and rolling stock. We find that the real estate of the company has been placed completely in the hands of an entirely separate corporate structure. Its mining, industrial developments and natural resources have been removed as the assets of the company, leaving only the railroad as such. This is something that was never intended in the original agreement with the C.P.R. These resources were provided to the C.P.R. in order to compensate for the tremendous costs and risks involved in constructing and operating the railway. Now these assets are being used for other purposes altogether.

These resources did not belong to the government or to the C.P.R.; they belonged to the people of Canada and are not being used for the benefit of the people of Canada as they should be.

There is one other point I should like to raise at this time, Mr. Chairman. It relates to my constituency and the need for a municipal airport in Red Deer. I dare say the city of Red Deer, a city now of some 27,000 people with a greater population in the immediate hinterland, is one of few such areas in this country that does not have a municipal airport. The reason an airport has not been established has centred around the uncertainty of the future of the R.C.A.F. air base at Penhold. The Department of National Defence have now indicated that in their plans for this base they do not intend to use its flying facilities for military purposes. They have indicated that the flying facilities at

[Mr. Pickersgill.]