

Supply—Transport

Mr. Pickersgill: I hope to have them this afternoon so we may conclude these estimates this evening—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pickersgill:—and give my colleagues a chance to enjoy this atmosphere.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Does the minister realize that during the question period he invited two more hon. members to speak this afternoon on his estimates?

Mr. Starr: Every time the minister makes a speech he brings on four more speakers.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am overcome, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Starr: You overcome yourself.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Chairman, the scope of this department and the far reaching effects which its decisions or lack of decision and lack of policy have on every citizen of Canada are so important that I think the minister is dreaming if he really believes that the unsatisfactory answers members of this house have received up till today will permit his estimates to pass today, tomorrow or even on Wednesday. If there is one thing that is obvious it is that this government has no policy with regard to transportation. Here is a department which should be administering the railways, steamships, air services and communication systems of this country in addition to the Atlantic Development Board and organizations such as the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority; yet in every field this government has procrastinated, ignored requests and refused to make decisions which are of vital importance to every part of this country. So great has been their lack of leadership in this regard that the morale of people working on the railways is so low—I think I can speak of this with some knowledge, representing as I do probably as many railway workers as any other member of parliament—that I want to warn the minister that in my opinion, on the basis of what I have been able to ascertain, there will be a strike on the railways of this country this year.

● (4:20 p.m.)

I do not know whether or not negotiations will proceed to the point where a strike will be legal. However, if the Canadian Pacific, which is being allowed to do anything and everything it wants to do by the government and the Board of Transport Commissioners, is

permitted to continue in its arrogant way as it did with the "Dominion", if it is permitted to continue making unilateral decisions as it did about the pension fund, if it is permitted to continue to steal from the pension fund, then I want to warn the minister, Mr. Chairman, that there will be a strike this year, the consequences of which none of us can estimate.

Before I deal with the Canadian Pacific I want to spend just a few moments on a subject which has united the people of my city of Winnipeg and of my province of Manitoba as no issue of which I am aware has done for the last 25 years. Here is an issue on which party division no longer exists. Here is an issue on which both newspapers, one a long time 100 per cent supporter of the Liberal Party, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and the other, the *Winnipeg Tribune*, a Conservative newspaper, are completely united.

I refer, of course Mr. Chairman, to the complete failure of this government and this minister to evolve policies with regard to air transport which are acceptable to the people of Manitoba. It is not my intention to debate this subject at length today. I want to tell the minister that when the estimates of his department go before the transport committee and the President of Air Canada comes before that committee, the President should be prepared to spend a long time in Ottawa rather than in his office in Montreal. I know other members are interested in the same subject. It is obvious that the President of Air Canada lied to the people of Winnipeg, lied to the government and the former government about his intention with regard to the air base in Winnipeg. He continued to lie and he continued to ignore the policies laid down by the Prime Minister and the former minister of transport in this government and I presume, although he has not had very much to say publicly, by the present Minister of Transport.

In February, 1949, Mr. Gordon McGregor, President of the then Trans-Canada Air Lines, announced that 155 persons in the operations and administration staff of Trans-Canada Air Lines, which at that time had its head office in Winnipeg, would be transferred to Montreal. He made this statement:

There is no conceivable reason, nor any grounds for suspicion, that this move marks the beginning of a mass transfer of T.C.A. activities from Winnipeg to Montreal.

Since that date in 1949 not a year has gone by but another department of Air Canada, as