

CNR and Air Canada

is a matter I hope to raise at a later date either in this House or in committee.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I listened earlier to the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman) and I immediately understood why he is referred to as the member for "Vancouver quandary," because he certainly was in a quandary when he was trying to talk about grain, grain movement, elevators and the like.

Mr. Deachman: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I do not mind the hon. gentleman saying I am in a quandary. However, I come from a constituency in which we are proud of the name Vancouver Quadra, which commemorates the names of two great, gallant seamen. I do not particularly like it referred to as "Vancouver quandary." I do not refer to the hon. member's constituency in derogatory terms, and I know he feels as proud of his constituency as I do of mine. If he wants to say I am in a quandary, that is another matter. I will take my lumps in debate as well as give a few myself sometimes, but I think he should respect our constituencies and what they stand for.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I am rather pleased I gave the hon. gentleman an opportunity to say something worth while for a change. Perhaps he was not listening. I do not wish to continue this sort of argument, but I said that after listening to him it is no wonder many of his colleagues call him the hon. member for "Vancouver quandary." I did not suggest that was the name of the constituency. The hon. member's oversensitivity ran away with his good judgment.

When I first moved up to north central British Columbia many years ago, Canadian National Railways used to operate a train between Jasper, Alberta, and Prince Rupert, the terminus on the coast, on a three-day a week basis. One day it went westbound and the next day it went eastbound and the seventh day was day of rest. After that a bit of progress was made and the passenger train expanded its operations to run six days each way. In other words, we had a train each day, one going east and one going west.

In recent years the Canadian National has seen fit to revert to that earlier time when there was a smaller population and less industrial activity than there is now. We are back on a three-day schedule, and have been for quite a number of years now except during the peak summer months of tourist traffic. It was always my impression that the Canadian National was an organization that always looked backward, but I see from the revelations about radio and things like that that it did not look back far enough in order to find some inspiration to do something worth while for the nation.

At one time it was a pretty proud occupation, and still is, to be a railroader. Railroaders had good morale, a good feeling, good comradeship and loyalty to the company, particularly in the Canadian National. There was a dedication of the individual to the efficient functioning and operation of the railway. The people who worked for the railway were very proud to be railroaders and proud to be working for that particular company. I do not know when

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

the change took place, but there was a coincidental, if nothing else, deterioration in the level of service, a decline in the morale and feeling of railroaders at about the same time the late Donald Gordon took over the reins of the CNR and became its president.

I think this was probably because of the attitude of Donald Gordon, the attitude about centralization of authority in the CNR, the attitude of computerizing the operations, the attitude of using a slide-rule and not being concerned so much with the actual functioning and operation of the railway, and the attitude about lay-offs and curtailment of service as well as everything else. In other words, there was an indication to the people who worked on the railway that Donald Gordon as the president was really not very interested in the people who worked as railroaders. There was not the old spirit at the top, and it filtered down on the men and destroyed the morale and efficient functioning of the Canadian National itself.

An hon. Member: It reflected government policy.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): One of my colleagues tells me it was a reflection of government policy. That may well be so. We know Donald Gordon was one of the dollar-a-year men during the war years, and perhaps the disinterest of Mackenzie King rubbed off on him.

• (2120)

As everyone says, in northern British Columbia we have a fantastic amount of natural wealth, fantastic amounts of minerals, timber, lumber, pulp and paper and everything that flows from that. We have an agricultural potential and a hydroelectric potential for industrial activity which abounds all over that country. The Canadian National Railways has an industrial development branch, section or division which in theory is supposed to concern itself with industrial development.

So far—and this is within the limited years of my knowledge of what they do—the CN has ignored completely whatever potential exists in the area from which I come and, I gather, in other areas as well. While the Canadian National theoretically has concern about industrial development, engineering and structuring its activity to provide development and job opportunities for people, it has completely ignored it and has operated on a kind of single-track mentality without any regard whatever for what its function should be.

Northward from the community called Hazelton, which in B.C. is the northernmost point on the CN line, some time during the early years of the Second World War—this would be about 30 years ago now—there was a designation made of a route classified as route A. It was a war-time concept, the hope being that this was one of the north-south routes that could be used to tie Alaska with the southern continental part of the U.S. and help better to prosecute the war effort. Finally, a different route was used, of course—namely, the Alaska highway.

The point I am trying to make is that 30 years ago this route was conceived and on quite a number of occasions since then, and in the latter years particularly, the CN has had engineers in that area who have conducted surveys. It was the Department of Transport, I believe, which contracted an engineering firm by the name of Menzies a few