

National Railway, and it is our duty as a committee, when the head of a board of trustees says I am prepared to make a statement on matters that are more or less controversial, reflecting to some extent upon the administration of the railways and the results achieved by the board; I say for this committee to say that he shall not have the opportunity, and that we will not hear him—

The CHAIRMAN: Nobody has said that, Mr. Stewart.

Hon. Mr. STEWART: That is what I understand, we were just going to shut this all off.

The CHAIRMAN: Nothing doing.

Hon. Mr. STEWART: I say, that is contrary to all the practices and to the spirit of all investigations that have ever taken place into the Canadian National Railways, and that it is in the public interest, and that it is in the interest of the Canadian National Railways that no such course should be adopted.

The CHAIRMAN: May I ask you a question?

Hon. Mr. STEWART: Yes, Mr. Chairman. And I want to bring the matter to a conclusion by moving that the chairman be requested to prepare a statement of the position of the board of trustees with respect to these controversial matters, that statement to be submitted to this committee.

The CHAIRMAN: May I point out, Mr. Stewart, that you appear to have forgotten one principal point; that the Bill is still before the house.

Hon. Mr. STEWART: Exactly.

The CHAIRMAN: It has not been decided that the Bill shall not be referred to this committee. I submit that should the House of Commons decide instead of considering this Bill in committee of the whole to submit it to this committee then will come the time for us to discuss the points you are raising now.

Hon. Mr. STEWART: Now, Mr. Chairman, I am afraid you are overlooking the position I have taken all through. I do not propose to discuss that Bill, or the provisions of that Bill, at all. I want to make that perfectly clear. I am not asking that the Bill be referred to this committee that we may discuss its provisions, nor do I desire to make any discussion in connection with it at all. All I am asking is that we do discuss and examine the statement made by the minister in connection with the management of the railway.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: The minister is not under investigation here, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Mr. STEWART: I am not investigating the minister at all. The minister has the right to make any statement he likes in the house, and I say that the board of trustees, through its chairman, and I make this statement with the greatest respect, ought to be called upon, ought to be authorized, ought to be directed, ought to be requested to make a statement with respect to their administration during their period of office, which to a considerable extent is criticized, and which criticism to a certain extent places them under a cloud; I say that they should have the opportunity, each and every one of them if they want it, to clear that up and to make their own statements. And I say that if this committee shuts that off and acts as suggested, that we will not be allowed to get this statement, that then we are stopping short of our duty, we are acting in a manner altogether different from what has been carried on in the past.

Hon. Mr. HOWE: I might say, Mr. Stewart, that the trustees have already made two annual statements. No one is preventing them from making any statement at any time or in any place they like. Why insist that they make a statement before this particular committee to which this bill has not been referred? They can make a statement in the newspapers if they want to.

Hon. Mr. STEWART: I say that this is the proper place in which to investigate matters relating to the Canadian National Railways. The press is not the place. This committee should be the place in which to get the facts.