

● (2050)

I have spoken to people engaged in the railway business. I have spoken to people involved in the laying of track. I have been told about the continuous weld and about the problems we have with unitized trains as well as the large curves. I am told that if we straightened out the track between Montreal and Halifax we would save something like 100 miles in trackage. In addition, it is said that the tracks are not parallel. This is one of the problems. When the trains go around these curves, the cars actually bind to the tracks and three, four or five power units are required in the front to pull them around the curves.

There is a good deal of study and engineering work which could be done to sort out these problems. However, instead of this we see large amounts of money being asked for in this bill to further the hotel business, I suppose also the tourist business, and the communications business of the CNR. I think somewhere along the line we must in this parliament have some control over the CNR. If the minister has no control over it, then somewhere along the line this House must have some control over it.

One hon. member, I believe it was the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin), asked what the point is in all this business about the communications tower, since the damn thing is already built. In other words, the CNR just goes ahead and does things on its own without being questioned and without being responsible to anyone but itself. A colleague to the far left here is saying that we should nationalize the CNR. Of course, that is where the difficulty is now. It is nationalized and they know that when they get into trouble all they have to do is create a crisis within the country and we will bail them out by giving them more money or another subsidy.

This is why I say somewhere along the line the rules must be changed or modified so that this House in fact will have some control over the spending and planning of the CNR. If we do not do that, then the CNR in fact is not accountable to this House and the people of Canada and I cannot see how the situation could be improved. It would become worse, the railway would become further in debt and we would have a continuous problem year after year.

**Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to add a few comments to this debate, particularly since I have recently been involved in many discussions regarding railways. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency there are large and small industries which are closing their operations. There are massive lay-offs because of lack of service by the national railways.

I also appreciate this opportunity because recently the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) both in the House of Commons and outside made various interesting statements. He compared the Canadian National Railways with the Canadian Pacific Railway. He said the Canadian National is one of the finest railways in the world. In fact, he said it is the finest railway system in the world. What a statement to make. I wonder what the minister compared it with when he made that statement. Perhaps he looked at the towers and hotels we intend to build. Surely we have the finest hotels in the world. The minister probably wants to compete with the large institutions which build

*Canadian National Railways and Air Canada*

these fine hotels. Perhaps that is the yardstick the minister used. I should like to use other yardsticks to determine what our railways are doing in terms of moving people and goods, getting products to market and maintaining a position for our industries in the markets of the world.

There could not possibly be any industrialized country in the world that does worse than Canada. We make deals all over the world. One year we have a large quantity of products such as wheat in our bins and we go out and sell it at fire-sale prices, only to find out that our railways cannot get it to the market. The next year we do not have anything to sell and, as a consequence, when we do have something to sell again the buyers do not trust Canadian industry. One year we cannot grow it and the next year we cannot ship it.

I should like to compare the Canadian railway system with systems in other countries. We have special problems in Canada because of our great distances and the elements. While I would agree that we cannot build an electric train system throughout Canada, it should also be acknowledged that we cannot compare our railways with those of Germany, England and France which do have electric trains which run in every direction each 15 or 20 minutes. They calculate times by seconds rather than by days and hours as we do in Canada. So what was the minister talking about? He also talks about nationalizing the CPR. I found a paper on my desk, I did not bring it in myself, which reads as follows:

Government takeover of Canadian Pacific Railway is a possibility, transport minister Jean Marchand said in the Commons March 21 . . .

He spoke after NDP leader David Lewis urged nationalization of the "entire shebang" of the CPR.

Mr. Marchand said:

"I do not say no immediately.

"I just say that the first thing we have to elaborate is a new (transportation) policy, a corrected or improved policy, to determine national objectives, and after that see by what weapons we can really attain those objectives."

Then he added:

"Whatever some people may think I have no vested interest anywhere."

I do have a vested interest in this shebang. I do pay taxes and worry about the \$20 million or \$25 million we spend to build towers and hotels. I worry about the \$25 million in subsidies we pay to run trains from one loan to the next. I worry about the \$140 million we spend to subsidize the railways. Since we do not have a transportation policy in this country, it would almost seem that the time has come to work out a policy, not a policy that would compare with anything they run in Germany between Munich and Nuremberg but a policy that would run trains from Winnipeg to Vancouver with some grain, or from Prince George to Vancouver with some lumber, to load on a ship. That kind of policy would have to challenge the imagination of engineers and people who create industries which compete on world markets.

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There was such a brainwave at the western resource conference where transportation was one of the main topics. A very imaginative proposal was outlined at that conference by the province of Alberta. There were people there who have vision and who can see the challenges of