

Freight Rates Reduction Act

of more people of French background and culture to the management of the C.N.R. I am sure the Minister of Transport has not signed that particular petition, but it might give some push to it if he has, or has been asked to. But quite frankly, I think the promotion of a petition of this sort is a step in the wrong direction. I do not think it serves any great purpose at this time, not that I concern myself at this stage with whether or not the petition is justified. This sort of activity is taking place when we should be concentrating our efforts at this time on a better and more efficient management of the C.N.R., especially from the presidential point of view. We should concentrate upon that and not get involved in these other issues, important as they might well be. Burning Donald Gordon in effigy, as happened last week in Montreal and, as I understand it, also having burned the red ensign, is not in good taste or a decent sort of thing to do, and it tends to detract from the worthwhileness of the approach of those in this house and elsewhere who would like to see a change in management on the Canadian National Railways.

The hon. member for Port Arthur went extensively into the need for enunciation on the part of the government of some clear, sensible, fair, transportation policy, and I think this is where we should be directing our attentions. While the bill which will be founded on this resolution will be going to a committee, I think that committee should delay any action or report until we get a clear indication from the government as to what it intends to do about the report of the royal commission on transportation; what its policy is with respect to all the matters raised therein; what it intends to do about the question—a pretty large and broad one which has been posed on a number of occasions—of a merger of the C.N.R. and C.P.R. into one large trans-continental railway system in Canada; what it intends to do about what is undoubtedly going to occur as a result of this government action, namely both T.C.A. and C.P.A. running to the government asking for subsidies to help each of them; and what it will do about the question of coastal shipping and the like. They are such important questions that I think when the committee gets the bill founded on the resolution it should delay action and delay any report on it, and put it aside until we get the minister and other cabinet ministers before the committee to tell the committee what the government intends to do with respect to the whole transportation question in Canada.

Mr. Pickersgill: May I ask the hon. gentleman a question?

Mr. Howard: Certainly.

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Mr. Pickersgill: Does the hon. gentleman think that it would be any easier to get a statement like that out of this government than it would be to put humpty-dumpty together again?

Mr. Howard: I am not involved in this field of glueing eggs together, but I am sure that we would have as much success in getting an enunciation of policy out of this government as we would have had in getting one out of the government which preceded it.

Mr. Pickersgill: Has the hon. gentleman a policy of his own?

The Deputy Chairman: Order.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Chairman, I have to thank you for inadvertently combining the ridings of Essex West and Skeena, because actually that is the theme of my brief remarks this afternoon. That is to say, I suggest that the bill based on this resolution should contain measures to bring the area of south western Ontario and British Columbia closer together economically. In other words, the bill should contain measures to remove existing inequities and unfair discrimination in freight rates which presently mitigate against the proper economic development of south western Ontario in general, and Windsor, Ontario, in particular.

May I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that this situation exists today in this way. Shipments, for example, from Windsor to Halifax are computed on a mileage basis. But when we come to the movement of goods to the west from Windsor,—Windsor's geographical location and its favourable mileage in moving to the west as compared to other parts of eastern Canada, we find, are unfortunately completely ignored. On a short line basis through the United States, Windsor is only 988 miles from Winnipeg, and yet shipments of freight moving from Windsor to Winnipeg are charged on a mileage rate basis from Toronto of 1,231 miles. In other words, in spite of the closer geographical location, Windsor shippers pay the same rates as shippers to the west from Toronto and Montreal. The effect of this is to discourage industry from locating and remaining in the Windsor area.

I suggest that measures to remove these inequities in freight rate charges should be contained in the bill which will be based on this resolution. Our freight rate policy should certainly be part of a policy of regional economic development to prevent certain areas, such as the Windsor area, from continuing to lag behind the rest of Canada, and from continuing to be areas of chronic unemployment. It might be suggested that this is something which the board of transport commissioners