

Canadian National Railways

It is only now that that suggestion, repeatedly made in the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, has been given serious consideration. In this respect we were encouraged a few days ago when we heard the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) say in a speech in St. John's that a plan was being devised whereby extra accommodation would be provided during the peak tourist months when the service was not able to cope with the demand for traffic. He did not elaborate exactly what the government has in mind. Perhaps when this bill comes before the committee we shall have an opportunity to question the minister.

I hope the minister will be present in committee. He has not honoured us with his presence in the House during the second reading debate on this very important bill. We want to know what he has in mind with respect to the Newfoundland ferry service which is the life link between Newfoundland and the mainland of Canada. This service is very important to our province from the point of view of the tourist industry, which is assuming greater importance yearly, as well as from the point of view of providing an adequate service for the shipment of goods on a year round basis.

Although we experience peak tourist traffic during the months of June, July and August, the normal traffic still has to be carried across the gulf at the same time. Often this traffic has had to be turned back because accommodation has not been available. We shall wish to question the minister on this question. In this respect, Sir, we were encouraged because the minister told us that the authorities concerned expect to obtain a replacement for the *Patrick Morris*, a ship which sank in the gulf a few months ago under tragic circumstances. The replacement will have to be brought into service quickly because the tourist season is approaching once more.

May I now say a few words about the m/v *Ambrose Shea*. How many times have we, both in the House and in committee, had to impress upon the CNR the absolute necessity of promoting this service which could be vital to the tourist industry in my province and which could be a vital transportation link in the over-all structure? We have urged the railway and the minister to promote this service by an imaginative advertising campaign as well as by a reduction in rates. They finally got around to doing just that.

We are gratified that patronage of the service has increased substantially to the point where the service is now certainly justified. Nevertheless, we had to endure three frustrating years during which this service was not advertised. It was not promoted and the fares charged were too high. Even now there is still a case to be made for reducing rates on this east coast of Newfoundland service between Argentina and Sydney for truck traffic, because the rates charged discriminate against trucks. The rates obviously are designed to protect the CN monopoly. That, I think, is unfair and the matter deserves to be considered again.

There are other matters that we are concerned about. One of them is the road cruiser service which has replaced rail passenger service. It is not what it should

[Mr. McGrath.]

be. Certainly the buses are providing a service. Statistics indicate that many more people are being carried across Newfoundland by Canadian National buses. The fact remains that it is still a hazardous business to cross Newfoundland by bus in winter, as events of the last few days have dramatically illustrated.

That prompts me to ask this question: Why cannot that CN road cruiser service be supplemented with a rail-liner service? Rail-liner service is to be provided in northern Ontario. There is rail-liner service between Sydney and Truro, Nova Scotia. Why cannot the bus service in Newfoundland be supplemented with this type of rail service, utilizing the tracks across Newfoundland and providing a much more reliable service during the winter months? I offer that as a serious suggestion which I think ought to be examined when this bill is before the committee.

The question of freight rates, Mr. Speaker, is a cause of continuing concern. Since the freeze was lifted, freight rates have continued to rise. The continuing rise in freight rates, naturally, has been passed on to the consumer. The consumer in Newfoundland is already burdened with the highest cost of living in the country. In the final analysis it is the consumer who must pay. We are wondering where this will end and when these increases will level off at a point at which we can say, "This is what we have to cope with." We want assurance from the railway, when this bill is before the committee, that they are not contemplating any additional increases in freight rates to the province of Newfoundland.

Then, Mr. Speaker, there is the question of Canadian National hotels. This matter has been raised on a number of occasions in the House. Canadian National hotels are not operating under the minimum wage laws passed by this Parliament. They refuse to recognize the jurisdiction of Parliament with respect to minimum wages. This matter, I understand, is now the subject of a court hearing in one of the provinces of this country. That the minimum wage laws of this country, as defined by Parliament which has jurisdiction in this area and which has set the minimum wage at \$1.65, are not recognized by Canadian National hotels is, to me, a cause of great concern. I think this matter ought to be reviewed by the Transport Committee. I know it is a matter of great concern to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) who has taken great interest in it.

A serious situation has developed across the country which affects unions involved with the CN hotels system. At this time of year the unions are normally negotiating new contracts. At present they find themselves in the position of saying, "Well, we really cannot sign any contract because we must await the decisions of the court and the federal government in the matter of the minimum wage laws of the country." In my province, Newfoundland, CN operates a hotel. In St. John's, the employees of the CN hotel are receiving less and in some cases, considering the number of hours they have to work, considerably less than the minimum wage of \$1.65 an hour that has been established by Parliament. This area of concern I think is most serious.