

Though guarded, there nevertheless was the assurance that the government was interested in the position of retired employees of Canadian National Railways.

On June 19, 1969, as reported at page 10451 of *Hansard* for that date, the Minister of Transport was responding to a question of mine on the "late show" and was assuring me that something was going to be done for these retired employees. He referred, of course, to the fact that they also received the old age security pension; but if that is to be frozen and denied the escalation we have known for the past few years, then this makes the situation even more urgent. When the minister made a reference to the level of some of these pensions, *Hansard* records this interjection:

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It is still poverty.

Then, the minister continued immediately:

I cannot agree more with the hon. member that it is far from adequate. But I am sure he also realizes that while this group has had a good deal of attention in terms of increases in the old age pension, we do wish to do more; and I believe that we will do more.

Those are the words of the Minister of Transport speaking about Canadian National pensions in June of 1969, six months before the government announced an increase in the pensions of retired civil servants. That announcement, as I say, was made in December and it was acted upon in March of this year.

In January of this year some of us started to prod the Minister of Transport to get this question referred to the appropriate committee. The Minister of Transport told me, as reported at page 2385 of *Hansard* for January 14, 1970, that he would be glad to see that this matter was referred to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport and Communications as well as to officials of the CNR. Nine days later, nothing having happened, I asked the President of the Treasury Board about the matter and he assured me that it was going to be dealt with very soon. And so it went on.

As a result of all this, this question on the commitment of the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. Macdonald), who was then government house leader, was referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, and in my view that committee did a thorough and excellent job. I think I am in a position to say that because, although I did not formally become a member of the committee, I took the privilege accorded to hon. members who do not belong to a committee and attended most of the sessions when the committee was dealing with the subject of Canadian National pensions. In particular, I attended very faithfully during the time when the committee was working out its report.

Hon. members are fully aware that when the committee made its report it went into this question very thoroughly. It gave the Canadian National Railways a clean bill of health in some respects. For example, there had been charges that perhaps the Canadian National was doing something with the pension funds that it should not be doing; it was cleared on that count. However, the committee said in the plainest of language that the time

### *Canadian National Railways*

had come for crown corporations, particularly the Canadian National Railways, to do for their retired employees precisely what the Parliament of Canada had done for retired public servants.

That recommendation is spelt out in two paragraphs of the committee's report, one at the bottom of page 36:13 and one at the top of page 36:14 of the Minutes of the Committee for last session, No. 36. They read as follows:

4. At the outset, this Committee wishes to point out that the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan adopted the principle of adjusting pensions for cost of living increases. Furthermore, a second important principle has been adopted whereby Parliament in the name of all Canadians applied the cost of living adjustment on a current basis, but more important, retroactively to all public service pensions.

The Committee strongly recommends that these principles be adopted on a broader basis and that other major employers, including Crown Corporations, recognize their obligations to follow the lead of Parliament in this regard.

Then, this sentence, which is the key sentence of the whole report:

The Committee specifically recommends that the Canadian National Railways implement these principles forthwith.

The position could not be clearer, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Transport and Communications recommended that the CNR do for its employees precisely what the government of Canada, through action in Parliament, has done for its retired public servants. This report was unanimously adopted by the committee on September 9, 1970. The report was tabled in the House of Commons on Monday, October 5, 1970. Two days later, on October 7, 1970, a motion which had been placed on the Order Paper in the proper way by the hon. member for London East (Mr. Turner), who was acting on that day for the chairman of the committee, the hon. member for Lasalle (Mr. Lessard), who happened to be absent, was unanimously adopted by this House. There was no debate and there was no dissension. In other words, the House of Commons unanimously, including all parties, including backbenchers and the government, said that they agreed with and supported this report which called upon the Canadian National Railways to implement forthwith the principle of pension increases that had been adopted in respect of retired public servants.

● (2:30 p.m.)

I will just take a brief moment to remind hon. members that what was done for retired public servants was in two parts. There was a retroactive provision that would pay increases up to about 42 per cent for people who had been out for 18 years or more, and there was a provision that from then on there would be an increase in pensions every year for retired public servants if the cost of living continued to rise. That is what was before us when we made this recommendation, and it is that which we are calling upon the Canadian National Railways to implement for its employees.

Hon. members were not surprised when a few days later some of us began asking questions. It was on Friday, October 9, 1970, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 20, that I reminded the Minister of Transport of this