

*Railways and Shipping Committee*

This subject is one which I believe is of interest to all members of the house, though perhaps it might be considered as being of particular interest to those members who come from the Atlantic provinces. All that is necessary, however, is to read *Hansard* for a few years in order to appreciate what was said by members of the government when they were on this side of the house and to realize how the members of the Conservative party, when they were in opposition, were clamouring for increased services and facilities for the Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships. They were loud in their advocacy of the extension of the service. They advocated, for example, adding additional refrigerated space in these ships so as to make the service between this country and the West Indies more efficient. They pointed to the fact that this service was important to the trade between Canada and the British West Indies, and how important the trade was to the Atlantic provinces; they stressed the usefulness of this link between Canada and what is now the federation.

When the government of the day followed the somewhat cautious course—perhaps it was too cautious—of announcing that the service would be continued on a year to year basis, the Conservative opposition criticized us very severely, perhaps with cause, because we had not placed the service on a more permanent basis. They did approve, however, of the action taken by the previous government to give a longer life to the service, and I think they were actually commendatory of the action taken by the previous government when it announced that it was intended to operate the service for a further period of five years notwithstanding the fact that there had been deficits in the past which, perhaps, were not too agreeable to pay.

In other words, while in opposition the Conservative party was strong in support of the service I think, too, that Canadians generally realized that it had great usefulness. It fostered trade with the West Indies. It provided a ready and continuing means of transportation between this country and the islands; it was a service which was economic as well as sentimental; it was a service which had existed down through the years and which, I believe, this country liked to see in operation.

And now that the opposition has become the government, what has happened? They had hardly been in office for more than a few months before the sabotaging of the Canadian National Steamships service to the West Indies began to take place; and I do not apologize for using this word because I believe that is exactly what took place, the

[Mr. Chevrier.]

sabotaging of the Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships. In fairness to the minister I am not holding him exclusively to blame for the outcome because I think that would not be exactly in accordance with tradition; but I find it extraordinary, in view of all that was said in the past by those who now sit on your right, Mr. Speaker, that members of parliament such as the hon. member for Saint John-Albert (Mr. Bell) and the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Nowlan), who were so vocal in the past in their criticism of the government for not doing more, should have been party to the sabotaging of this steamship line and the discontinuance of its regular service between Canada and the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to those of us who sit on this side of the house to realize the manner in which the government consented to the transfer of the flag of the Canadian National Steamships to another country, and it would seem to me that the first thing—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I do not wish to restrict discussion improperly, but I ask the hon. gentleman to consider whether he is in order in dealing with the subject matter with which this committee would have to deal if it were established. As he well knows, the motion before the house is to establish a committee, to refer certain matters to it and to give it certain powers. Now, if I were to allow the hon. member to proceed to discuss the Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships and any other subject matter which this committee might have referred to it by this resolution, there would be no limit to the discussion here. As I said, I do not want to limit discussion unnecessarily but I ask him to consider whether that would not create an impossible situation.

**Mr. Chevrier:** If I may be allowed to speak to the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I may say that it has been the practice in this house over the years to allow the widest possible latitude in discussion upon the motion to establish this committee. I have not *Hansard* before me at the moment, but certainly in my experience in the years I was occupying the position which the minister occupies now, members of the House of Commons were allowed to rise in this debate and speak on matters concerning the Canadian National Railways, Trans-Canada Air Lines and Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships; particularly, sir, in view of the fact that many members are not on this committee and therefore would have no other opportunity of discussing these matters, save on this motion. It is true they could discuss them on other occasions, on the budget debate and on the