

Canadian National Railways

minutes he has reorganized this corporation from top to bottom and has asked me whether I agree with all the steps of his reorganization. I can only say that his statement is a little too comprehensive for me to agree with completely. I would hesitate to express a personal view now as to whether Air Canada should, to use his terms, go public. If a view was given it might be an uninformed one. The purpose of the studies now being made is to obtain an informed opinion. I am sure the hon. member would not want me to put forward something off the top of my head. This would serve no useful purpose other than to communicate my prejudices.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, I hope my question will be in order. It has relation to a question I placed on the order paper and an answer which was given on October 30, to be found at page 2201 of *Hansard*. My question was:

What was the cost to Canadian National Railways for providing rail passenger service in Newfoundland for each year from 1949 to 1967 inclusive?

I will not read the minister's answer in its entirety, but in essence he refused to answer the question. The company took protection from the Railway Act, section 314 (3). I must confess that I have not read that, but I find it difficult to understand why this information should not be made available to members of the house. The government pulled one statistic for one year only, 1966, and the minister referred to that in his answer. He referred to an operating deficit of \$918,000. My question is, why is this information not available to members of parliament.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Chairman, I can understand how this information is considered to be of some importance by the hon. gentleman. Let me suggest that the most effective vehicle for him to pursue this matter is the standing committee on transport and communications, which will take up the annual report of the C.N.R. The senior officials of the C.N.R. are customarily present at that time. I am sure this is a very effective way of raising these matters. At that time the hon. member will be in a very good position, I hope, to get satisfaction.

Mr. Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Chairman, I understand that this financial measure in respect of Air Canada is an interim one. It is not a proposal to re-capitalize the corporation or anything like that. If the

[Mr. Drury.]

government decides that Air Canada should go public at some time in the future, will we have an opportunity to look at this matter again?

Mr. Gray: Yes, that is certainly correct. This bill does not involve anything in the way of recapitalization. It is designed to permit something that is done annually; that is to say, the authorization of steps required to provide Air Canada with the capital funds and if necessary amounts for operating deficits. I believe these have not been necessary recently.

Mr. Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): There has been some discussion in the house in respect of the Roberts Bank situation, having regard to Canadian and United States transportation in Canada. Some suggestions have been made as to whether we should haul potash in Canada by Canadian or United States railroad companies. There has also been a great deal of coverage in the press about container shipping. Does the government have an over-all transportation policy which might cover this matter? Does it have any one plan or idea, or does it intend to deal with each issue as it arises?

Mr. Gray: The hon. member has raised a very important topic. May I suggest that this bill is not designed to afford an opportunity for general discussion on transportation policy. If I were in the hon. member's position I would take advantage of the opportunity provided by a debate on the estimates of the Department of Transport. This will take place in this house in the committee of the whole and they will be piloted by the Minister of Transport. The hon. member will have the opportunity then to go into this matter in detail. Perhaps he will want to pursue this topic when the estimates of the transport Commission are referred to the standing committee, or when the committee is considering the annual report of the C.N.R.

While I am not in any way trying to imply that the point raised by the hon. member is not important—because it is—at the moment we are looking at something more limited in respect of the transportation question, and that is the financing of the operations of the C.N.R. by the Canadian government.

Mr. Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): I accept the minister's statement. I should like to raise another matter dealt with in the