

Transportation

Mr. Pickersgill: It seems there are a number of hon. members who wish to speak and I think we should make use of the time allotted under the rules and go right ahead.

Mr. Winkler: But I thought the original idea came from the Minister of Transport himself. Was there not some sort of agreement? I have no objection.

Mr. Pickersgill: The Minister of Transport would benefit by having no dinner.

Mr. Winkler: So would the Conservative whip. But what about other people?

Mr. Prittie: I am unlike the Minister of Transport in that connection. Often, Mr. Speaker, I hear it said that politics should be kept out of our discussions of transportation problems. There was, I believe, a suggestion to this effect in the *Globe and Mail*, from which newspaper the minister quoted in his speech. This, it seems to me, is a totally unrealistic approach, an approach based on a lack of understanding of the processes we use in this country and in this house.

I was interested in one sentence in that particular *Globe* editorial which posed the following question:

—or every time an unprofitable line is to be abandoned or an unreasonably low freight rate is to be raised, will the politicians leap to defend the local or group interest, forgetting the national interest?

I think the answer to that question is, yes. This is not to say there are not many subjects with which members of the House of Commons can deal in national terms, not merely in local terms. But it seems to me that the railways and freight rates are not among those subjects.

I suggest also that if members of parliament, particularly opposition members, did not express critical views of interest to their constituents they would be condemned by those same sources for merely acquiescing in everything the government tried to suggest. Incidentally, it seems to me that the railway bill with which we dealt last week was greatly improved as a result of the activities of opposition members.

The minister told us that Bill No. C-120, dealing with the same subject, was introduced in 1964 but did not pass. In the event, he told us, this was probably a good thing.

We have heard a good deal in Canada in recent years about minority government, whether it is good or bad, and I suppose one's views on this depend upon where one sits. If

in 1964 the government of the day had possessed a majority, that bill would undoubtedly have gone through the house and become law. Yet the minister has admitted today that it was a poor bill in many respects and tells us we have a better bill before us today.

Many organizations in Canada made representations before the railway committee at that time, and the objects of some of their submissions have been incorporated in the present bill. It seems to me this ought to become a regular process, that the reputation of a government should not be at stake when a bill is first presented and that a certain amount of time should elapse in the course of which those of the public who are interested could express their views. When this had been done parliament could get down to the real work of legislation.

Compared with the bill presented in 1964 the measure now before us is greatly changed. The preamble begins with the words:

It is hereby declared that an economic and efficient transportation system making the best use of all available modes of transportation at the lowest total cost is essential to the economic well-being and growth of Canada;—

It then goes on to suggest means by which this objective can best be achieved.

It seems to me that a coherent national transportation policy could be more easily attained if both our major railway lines were under a single ownership and authority. We are dealing in fantasy if we imagine we can have a coherent and sensible transportation policy in Canada while a major link in the system is not subject to direct government authority. I am referring, of course, to the Canadian Pacific Railway. No doubt it is possible to make public policy felt, and have it implemented by indirect means. Nevertheless, this could be done more directly and more efficiently if ownership were vested in the people.

In this connection I am not speaking of the railways alone. I would remind the house that the two big railway companies in this country control in turn a great many trucking lines. I do not know what percentage of the interprovincial trucking business is controlled by the C.P.R. and the C.N.R. but it amounts to a large share. These two companies control telecommunications, water transport and air transport.

Thus, if we are to have a coherent transportation policy responsible to public opinion