

*Canadian National Railways*

the demands for reinstatement of this service, and I should just like to take a moment to explain why. First, I was annoyed by the fact that without even waiting for an examination of the question by the Canadian Transportation Commission, the CNR took it upon itself to advise the Canadian post office that after February 1 it could no longer supply mail car service between Winnipeg and Long Lac. The post office was advised, back in December, to seek other means of providing that necessary service to the communities involved. That seems a bit presumptuous to me, but it may be a small incident.

Second, the cancellation of trains Nos. 7 and 8 represents a severe curtailment of service to many Canadian communities. Prior to the discontinuation of trains Nos. 7 and 8, passenger, express and mail service could be given to any community in northern Ontario in winter or summer within a 24 hour period from either Toronto or Winnipeg. For example, refrigerated grocery goods could be sent by express from Winnipeg at 9 p.m. and arrive in Sioux Lookout at 3.10 a.m. to be delivered fresh that morning to the merchants. The alternatives are now uncertain because many of the 91 communities between Winnipeg and Toronto have no highways. Furthermore, since trains Nos. 7 and 8 are being discontinued, the Supercontinental is expected to carry an extra load, resulting in the Supercontinental running on a schedule which will make it operate like a milk train.

The management of the CNR suggests that adjustments in services will result in an extended running time for the Supercontinental of from one to one and a half hours. It is already obvious that Supercontinental trains are arriving three to four hours late as a result of attempting to give proper service to the 91 communities I have mentioned. This downgrading of the Supercontinental will, in turn result in a decline in passengers and passenger demand for sleeping and dining car services. I have no doubt that ultimately the CNR will ask for the abandonment of Supercontinental service. I would, therefore strongly suggest to the government that it should immediately take steps to have the CNR put trains Nos. 7 and 8 back into service to provide the alternative necessary to the Supercontinental and to prevent the erosion of that first class service. There was no justification, financial or otherwise, for dropping the services of trains Nos. 7 and 8.

As a further suggestion, I would indicate to the government that it is essential to immediately establish a definite policy on the development of a proper continental passenger train service with modern passenger equipment, one capable of providing service to communities without highways as well as other Canadian communities which require such a service.

I have mentioned a number of specific problems and I could mention many more, but they all boil down to the direction government policy has taken in the past number of years in respect of public transportation. It has been entirely wrong. Increasingly, governments have been attempting to divorce themselves from making policy decisions in the area of transportation by insisting, rather too strongly, upon the autonomy of Crown corpo-

rations operating in this field; by setting up so-called independent boards and commissions to look after the development and implementation of policy on public transportation; by insisting upon treating crown corporations engaged in public transportation as normal business ventures, and thus judging them on the basis of their balance sheet rather than on the basis of whether they are meeting public needs.

I am not saying that crown-owned transportation companies should not concern themselves with their profit and loss positions. What I am saying is that their primary consideration should be whether they are providing the sort of service which meets the needs of the country. To put it another way, the government must decide what kind of transportation system this country requires to meet its current needs and to assist in its future development. Having made such a decision, the government must then instruct its Crown corporations to meet those needs as efficiently, both in terms of service and costs, as is humanly possible. If such a policy results in the corporations running a deficit, then the deficit should be paid and paid gladly as one of the costs of developing our country in an orderly fashion and providing our people with the quality of life to which they aspire. If this means changing the legislation governing the CNR and Air Canada, then change it.

What is happening now is that we are dealing with transportation in a piecemeal fashion through the Canadian Transportation Commission. Air Canada is having its routes carved up and handed over to regional carriers without regard to the over-all implications for the nation or the cumulative effect of each individual decision. I suggest that this may very well result in the kind of situation that occurred in the 1920's when railroads all over the country were going bankrupt and the public of Canada had to invest wildly in an attempt to establish some sort of a rational system. The debt thus incurred is one of the major problems confronting the CNR at this moment.

To get back to my point, the railroads are applying to reduce service or to abandon lines on a piecemeal basis. Decisions are made one by one, once again without proper regard for their cumulative effect upon public transportation in this country. Indeed, as in the case of the abandonment of trains Nos. 7 and 8 by the CNR, we have the ridiculous situation of a minister of the Crown informing this House that he has absolutely no control over the actions of a Crown corporation in an area of public policy as vital to the national interest as public transportation. This has to stop. Something else must be begun. Except for the turbo train now operating between Toronto and Montreal, virtually no experiments in high speed rail service are being undertaken in Canada. This is the situation at a time when in all other parts of the developing world countries are up to their elbows in such developments. Indeed, we in this country are busily engaged in divesting ourselves of what little passenger service remains.

I wish to quote some figures in this regard from an article which appeared in the January edition of the