

*CNR and Air Canada*

Having said this, I want to make some specific suggestions with regard to improving the present service. I had occasion to use these terminals fairly recently and I can therefore speak from personal knowledge. There are two areas which need substantial improvement. The first is so obvious that it hardly needs mentioning. It arises from the fact that after ten o'clock in the evening there is no provision whatever for food or sustenance for those who might have to wait many hours for ferries. I cannot understand why, when they are so close to the operation, the CNR has allowed or compelled that restaurant service close at 10 p.m. while still operating the ferries until 1 a.m.

It would be bad enough if the ferries operated on a regular schedule. But everybody who knows this service knows that for a long period during the winter months one cannot be sure how long it will be before a ferry leaves or how long the crossing will take from either of the terminal centres. On some occasions people must wait five or six hours, well into the small hours of the morning, literally without food or drink to sustain them. Surely, inhumane conditions of this kind do not need to be perpetuated and a reasonable adjustment could be made in restaurant hours to provide necessary facilities required by travellers, particularly during the cold winter months.

My second criticism is of particular importance to those who use the service infrequently or rarely. There is a real paucity of information concerning the time at which ferries travel or what delays the traveller can expect. I arrived at one of the terminals the other night shortly after midnight and tried to find out whether the ferry would leave on time. For a long time I was unable to get this information. Finally, though, I was able to rouse an official who was occupied with quite another responsibility and he was able to tell me. Surely it would not take a great deal of effort or imagination to provide some way by which simple information could be given to the travelling public.

There is another matter I should raise in connection with the ferry service. A continuing bone of contention is the off and on again situation with regard to the *John Hamilton Gray*. Many hon. members will recall the concern expressed by Islanders when this vessel, the flagship of the fleet, was suddenly whisked away from the Prince Edward Island operation to the Newfoundland-Port aux Basques run. Islanders felt rightful indignation that a ship which had been constructed especially to operate between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick should suddenly be plucked from that service to supplement a service for which it had not been constructed and for which it was not, in some respects, particularly suited. I am aware that the Minister of Transport is again considering relocating the *John Hamilton Gray* on the Newfoundland service in the summer months. I think this would be a move not happily accepted by Islanders.

I am even more concerned about the possibility that, having once gone into the Newfoundland service again, the vessel might stay there for an indefinite period and not return to Prince Edward Island next fall. Any suggestion of such a step would in my opinion be tantamount to a breach of the basic agreement in the constitution to provide continuous and effective communication between Prince Edward Island and the mainland. I cannot believe

that any official in the Department of Transport would treat such a request seriously.

I ask the CNR to consider how it could ever discharge its duties in terms of the movement of heavy traffic during the winter months in the absence of a ship such as the *John Hamilton Gray*. It is crucial that the *Gray* be retained to handle the heavy movement of freight during the winter months. Moreover, in my opinion, it will be crucial, perhaps not this summer but in succeeding summers, to make use of the *Gray* to handle the tremendous annual increase in tourist traffic in Prince Edward Island. Any worsening of the service presently provided would amount to a great obstacle to the economic development and improvement of Prince Edward Island.

I wish to refer briefly to only one further question with regard to the legislation under discussion. This bill also encompasses grants of money for Air Canada. Prince Edward Island is a unique province in many ways. It is particularly unique in terms of air transport in that it is the only province not served by the national carrier, Air Canada. Prince Edward Island has never been served by Air Canada because our air transport requirements over the years have been met by regional carriers, first Maritime Central Airways and in more recent years Eastern Provincial.

• (2110)

There have been suggestions that Eastern Provincial will be altering its schedule shortly. It has an application to this effect. The application is to direct its main service from Charlottetown through Halifax and an intermediate point to Montreal. Such a step would certainly be a backward one. I have had the experience of representing an area, Summerside, in Prince County, Prince Edward Island, which has lost the air service previously provided by Eastern Provincial and before that by Maritime Central Airways. I would hope there is not an attempt on the part of the regional carrier to further downgrade the service provided out of the province itself by air.

Surely, if Prince Edward Island is faced with a deteriorating air service from this regional carrier there will deservedly be much more pressure for the national carrier to provide service to all ten provinces and not just nine as is presently the case. I would hope Air Canada as well would examine the air requirements from time to time which exist in Prince Edward Island, because I do not think it is inevitable that forever and a day the island should not be part of the national air transportation link. It might well be that on a trial basis Air Canada could well serve Prince Edward Island during the peak travel months of July and August. I believe this would be met with great favour by those who are increasingly using air transport to visit Prince Edward Island during the heavy tourist months.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude with the hope that Canadian National Railways, which has provided service internally to Prince Edward Island for years in the past, will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Without the movement of railroad traffic it would be impossible to move internally or externally our heavy production in potatoes. I am concerned about the level of maintenance being put forward on the island roadbeds as they already exist. This