

Canadian National Railways

years ago. Perhaps he will remember that. When Newfoundland became a province of Canada in 1949 it had a first class railway system, albeit a narrow gauge railway but one which at least provided service to our people. The railway was taken over by the Canadian National, as was their responsibility to do, whereupon they embarked upon a deliberate policy of downgrading the service. This was because they looked upon the people of Newfoundland as one big "Newfie" joke. It is a big Newfie joke, Mr. Chairman, because in actual fact that laugh is on us at this particular time.

Although we cannot present statistical facts to support our argument, we nevertheless contend that from 1949 onwards Canadian National set out upon a deliberate policy of downgrading our passenger service and discouraging people from using it, as a result of which it was able to present arguments to the effect that the service was no longer justifiable.

There is one difficulty, Mr. Chairman, about this alleged deal to complete the trans-Canada highway; the highway in Newfoundland does not measure up to trans-Canada standards. The road goes from one end of Newfoundland to the other, 600 miles of narrow highway which I submit is one of the most hazardous highways in the world. As my hon. friend from Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador said so eloquently, there are stretches on the highway where you can drive for 100 miles and not even find a logger's shack; where there is no sign of human habitation; where the winter conditions are the most severe in the world; conditions in which even the Canadian National Railways have experienced trains being stuck in the snow for days, 70 or 80 hours not being unusual.

I hope the president of the C.N.R. accepts the invitation put forward by the hon. member for Oxford and takes a trip across Newfoundland on a bus in January. I should like to see him joined by Mr. Pickersgill, the chairman of the Canadian Transport Commission. I should like to see the Minister of Transport, who is not in his seat today, also take that journey. I say the same of the Minister of Defence Production. And just for kicks, Mr. Chairman, I also include the premier of Newfoundland. Can you conceive in your mind's eye, Mr. Chairman, that motley group being stuck in the wilds of Newfoundland in the midst of a January blizzard! Words fail me to describe to you what might

[Mr. McGrath.]

possibly come out of such an incident. Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, if that were to happen—and I say this in all sincerity—they would not be so anxious to proceed with this plan to deprive us of what we feel is our right as Canadian citizens.

The position of the province of Newfoundland has been stated by a senior member of the Newfoundland government, a man billed as the major rival of the Minister of Defence Production to take the throne and wear the mantle of Joey. What did this man say to the commission, Mr. Chairman? His position was to the effect that any alternative service inaugurated by the railway should be one that would properly discharge its responsibilities. In effect, he said that until such time as the railway could conclusively prove that a bus service would discharge the responsibility that was assumed under the terms of union, the government of Newfoundland was opposed to the submission made by the C.N.R.

I should also like to quote the words of Mr. C. Woodward in the report of the commission, in which it handed down its just judgment. These can be found at page 13 of the report, where Mr. Woodward said:

To sum up in a few words the feelings expressed in these briefs—

Here he is referring to the brief submitted in opposition to the railway's application.

—it would seem to be: Do not treat us, the people of Newfoundland, as second class citizens of Canada by forcing upon us a second class system of passenger service.

I subscribe to those words, Mr. Chairman, and I only regret that the Canadian Transport Commission did not subscribe to them.

The Chairman: Order. I regret to inform the hon. member that his time has expired, unless it is the will of the committee that he continue his remarks.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

The Chairman: The hon. gentleman must have unanimous consent to continue his remarks. Has he unanimous consent? The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. McGrath: Might I suggest to those who hesitate to give me unanimous consent, Mr. Chairman, that there but for the grace of God go they. Their province might be next.

The Canadian Transport Commission, in summing up their report, also summed up the essence of the opposition that was presented