

National Transportation Policy

railroad system than the American public does about the quantity and quality of service it gets (or doesn't get) from some of the privately owned and operated . . . railroad lines in the United States.

And further on:

The French railroad service does not pay its way—no nation's railroad system does. In 1969, the French railroads "lost" \$354.8 million—compared, for instance, to the Italian railroads' 1969 deficit of \$504 million, and the Japanese railroads' \$453 million.

• (1610)

However, Mr. Speaker, those losses were paid by those nations as a whole. As a result of the public paying, both through fares and subsidies, they receive superior, fast, efficient and comfortable passenger service. The record of these operations, compared to the dismal showing we make in our nation, should cause us to take a more serious look at the kind of national transportation policies we have.

A number of steps must be taken to start putting our transportation system in a situation where Canadians in all parts of the country will get fully modern, efficient, integrated transportation services at fares and rates that are more equitable, and that they can afford. I would like to suggest a few changes.

First, we should make basic changes in our transportation policy and legislation that would put service and meeting transportation needs ahead of profitability. As long as the government and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) advocate that Canadian National Railways and Air Canada should operate on the basis of profitability first, we will continue to have the kind of service we have had and it will get worse. As long as we continue to treat both Canadian National Railways and Air Canada unfairly in terms of private competition, they will continue to have the difficulties they now have and they will get worse. While I am not one of those who advocate state ownership of everything, I submit and the New Democratic Party believes that in the areas of transportation, essential public services and utilities, private enterprise has no place. In fact, it is inefficient and cannot meet all the transportation needs of any nation. We not only have the evidence of that in our country, but in scores of others. There is no need or place for private enterprise in our railway system or in our airlines.

The National Transportation Act needs to be amended to ensure service and the meeting of transportation needs must take priority over profitability. Unless we make that reversal in our present policy, regardless of what the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Thomas) might say, I submit these problems cannot be solved by continuing on the same track we have been on since 1867.

My next point covers an amendment that I will be moving. My colleagues and I have considered this very carefully. We do not in any way want to detract from the motion of the official opposition, but I submit that this amendment will merely be an addition to their motion. We hope it will point out one area in which the government and Parliament of Canada should move, that is to bring under public ownership the Canadian Pacific Company. I deliberately refer to it in that way because I understand that is now the official name of its railway and subsidiary operations. Only in this way can a change in the priorities

[Mr. Benjamin.]

of the CPR be brought about. This issue has been before Canadians for many years, and it has been a policy proposal of our party since the early thirties. That policy was accepted by our party in 1933. This reminds me of the time in the early thirties when there was talk about taking over the CPR. A farmer asked the CPR station agent for the time. The agent said "It is three o'clock CPR time." The farmer said "My God, do they own that, too!" That octopus needs to come under the ownership and control of the Canadian public.

We have a number of other proposals. If I had more time, I would elaborate on them. One in particular would be removing the financial handicap of the CNR by having the government take over the nearly \$2 billion long term debt, making the government a full shareholder on behalf of all Canadians and relieving the CNR of this heavy interest load.

Another proposal would be to bring about by stages, to as great a degree as possible, equalization of rail and air passenger fares and freight charges. Other proposals are putting an end to any further eroding of Air Canada routes and fully integrating a publicly owned CP Air into the present Air Canada system. Why do we need five regional carriers?

In view of these remarks and the remarks which my colleagues will make, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding):

That the motion be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and by adding immediately thereafter the following words:

"and further, as a step toward meeting this end, the House calls upon the Government to give consideration to the introduction of legislation providing for the public ownership of the Canadian Pacific company, including its railway and ancillary operations, with the objective of providing Canadians with efficient, integrated rail, air, water, communications and interprovincial trucking systems that give priority to service over profit."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. After looking at the amendment and Section 3 of the National Transportation Act, which is referred to in the amendment, I am prepared to accept the amendment moved by the hon. member. Unless hon. members wish to express a different opinion, I will allow the amendment to be put.

Mr. Steven Otto (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Thomas), who moved this motion, had in mind the type of transportation policy recommended in the amendment moved by the hon. member by Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin). I am sure the Conservative party did not intend this motion to include the nationalization of the CPR. Indeed, if it went no further, I imagine someone from the New Democratic Party would move that the whole kit and kaboodle come under the Saskatchewan government and that would be the death of the whole works, considering the experience with nationalization in that province.

The minister stated that the purpose of the act and the policy is to ensure that the railways operate with a profit motive. I am not so sure that they have operated with a profit motive. Indeed, if we examine the CNR over a period of years and the accumulated debt. I do not think we could say that there was much profit involved. It