

problem is to try to deal with them and to get back from the railroad concerned the kind of service that was once given to those towns. Most of the machinery parts that we get in the town of Biggar come by passenger bus. Now, buses were not designed to haul machinery parts; they were designed to haul people. For a number of years the railroads have made it clear that they do not want to haul people, and now it appears they do not want to haul parts for machines.

We have one of the most efficient agents in our town, and he pointed out that the little baggage compartment of a passenger bus can only hold so many machinery parts in addition to all the luggage. Any parts that cannot be put into that compartment are just left. He says that eventually the agents give up on the whole thing and drive to Saskatoon to get the parts.

The main CN line from Montreal to Vancouver runs through Biggar, yet the main line passenger bus is hauling machinery parts to this town. The only conclusion one can reach is that service to the customer is not the prime objective of either the carrier or the Canadian Transport Commission. I do not leave the Canadian Transport Commission free of blame. I know that its powers are very limited, but I have yet to see it come before a committee of this House and ask for a change in the act so that it can protect the needs of the customer.

As a result of the MacPherson Commission in 1967 and various other hearings and proposals, the new Transport Act created circumstances under which some subdivisions can only tolerate the trains moving at 15 miles an hour. Mr. Speaker, there was a time when I could move as fast as that on a saddle horse, but that is as fast as the CNR can move trains over a subdivision in my constituency. It is ridiculous, but that is the way it is. We haul machinery parts around in passenger buses and people living 70 miles or more outside Saskatoon have to bypass perfectly good towns and machinery agencies to drive God knows where to get parts. Perhaps this House will not believe me, Mr. Speaker, but there are places in southwestern Saskatchewan where the people would not use a car; they would use an aircraft to get the service they need. If this is supposed to be progress, then someone had better change the definition of that word in the dictionary.

I do not particularly want to say anything about Air Canada, as some other hon. members have. I suppose it has its problems, just like everybody else. In the part of the country from which I come, I think Air Canada takes second place to rail transportation, except for moving people. We are mainly concerned about rail and road transportation. If we do not have rail transportation, we have to spend a lot of money building highways for more buses and trucks to do the job that the railways will not do. If the railways eliminate branch lines, then we need more trucks and more expensive highways to move the grain, the produce and the livestock. Rail transportation is pretty important to my area, to the people who use it and the people who run it. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I hope we come up with a satisfactory settlement so that we can do the transportation job that needs to be done for the people of Canada.

### *Canadian National Railways and Air Canada*

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

● (1610)

**Mr. Ross Whicher (Bruce):** Mr. Speaker, I do not particularly relish speaking this afternoon on this bill dealing with the financing of the CNR because, frankly, I look at it with a feeling of hopelessness and complete frustration. I look on it with frustration because, ever since coming here in 1968, I have heard members on both sides of the House intelligently criticizing the operations of Canadian National Railways, yet nothing has happened as a result of those criticisms. Of course, the same situation existed for many years before 1968. I hope that members of the government, particularly the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), will read the last two speeches made in this House, the one by the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blenkarn) and the one by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), both of whom are members of the opposition. The feelings they expressed this afternoon are not representative merely of the feelings of the Conservatives, the NDP or of the Creditistes. They are shared sincerely by those who sit on the government side of the House.

I said I was frustrated because I have spoken on this subject on numerous occasions and have listened to others speak on it, but nothing has happened. I also have a feeling of hopelessness, because I am almost totally certain that no matter what the opposition has said in the past or this afternoon and no matter what I say, nothing will happen. The CNR will carry on in its own way, doing exactly as it sees fit. It will not pay one iota of attention to the wishes of the House of Commons. Certainly, this has happened in the past, as far as I can see. The fact is that our feelings, as voiced by the constructive criticism which has been given by members of this House, are shared, in my opinion, by the people of Canada. Those feelings the CNR has completed ignored over the years.

With respect, I suggest that the members of one side of this House are in the position to do something. Surely, I do not exaggerate when I say that the government has the right, the ability—

**An hon. Member:** And the obligation.

**Mr. Whicher:**—and the obligation, as an hon. member has said, to do something about this. Canadian National Railways may be a very important segment of the economy of Canada, but if they think they are bigger than the government of Canada or the parliament of Canada, they have gone too far. I suggest respectfully, and I say this apologetically as I hope members of the opposition will appreciate the position I am in, that the government is obligated, not only to parliament but to the people of Canada, to move into this field and, especially in extreme situations, to act.

It is unfortunate that the Minister of Transport is not present this afternoon. I would not want hon. members to think that I would refrain from the remarks I am about to make if he were here. He is obligated not merely to represent the department of government for which he is responsible; he is obligated, as well, to parliament and to the people of Canada and, so far as I am concerned, in some instances that obligation has not been fulfilled.