

*Fisheries and Forestry*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Order, please.

**Mr. Belsher:** I believe it is time that we continue to go as we are.

**Mr. Blaikie:** We have an over-capacity on the railroad right now.

**Mr. Manly:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member raised a concern about the motion. He said it was too vague when it talked about the social and environmental impact on the 36 Indian bands most directly impacted by this project and the need for assessment. When Chief Bob Pasco addressed the committee, one of the things he said was this:

I sat as a member of an environmental assessment review panel for over a year until the CNR decided to proceed with the work near Ashcroft through my reserve land without even meeting with my band. I was forced to resign to avoid a conflict of interest between my obligations to the Oregon Jack Creek Indian Band and the need for an objective input into the final report of the panel.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Order, please. The time for questions and comments is now terminated.

**Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior):** Mr. Speaker, my contribution to this debate will be brief because I, too, want the motion before the House passed and concurred in.

● (1720)

In working toward that end I would like to go back to the question posed by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow). I thought it was a useful question to place before the House. He asked the previous Minister of the Environment, the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia), why something had not been done sooner. Twin-tracking has not just started: there are already some 228 miles completed and another 538 miles to be completed. Why has something not been done sooner? Why are we now at the eleventh hour with an Order in Council about to be signed with last minute negotiations going on between the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) and Indian leaders? Did no one sound the alarm?

I want to tell Hon. Members that someone did sound the alarm. In the previous Parliament I had the honour of chairing the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. There was a member of that standing committee who said to me on more than one occasion that this will be a very explosive issue and something should be done about it. He said that we must draw to the attention of the Government the concerns of Indian people and environmentalists on this issue. The Member to whom I am referring is the Hon. Member for Cariboo-Chilcotin (Mr. Greenaway). He is now the Chairman of the Committee on Fisheries and Forestry. He gave leadership in that Committee in bringing forward this third report which has been moved for concurrence by the Hon. Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) this afternoon. That Member gave what I consider to be courageous leadership. In his concerns for his constituency and this country I find him to be one of the outstanding Members of the House. He deserves a great deal of credit.

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

**Mr. Penner:** The simple answer to the question of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North is that committees are not listened to by governments. There are many reasons why the previous Government lost its mandate. I would say that one of those reasons is that that Government was not particularly good at listening to expressions of unanimity from standing and special committees. It played around with the recommendations and all too often responded in a facile fashion. If the Government had listened more frequently to what parliamentarians were saying about legitimate concerns in the country, it may have lasted a lot longer.

It may be strange for me as a Member of the Opposition now to be advising the new Government to listen to its committees. If it does it will be around for much longer than I would like to see it around. In most cases parliamentarians are in touch with the people. They meet in committees, receive testimony, analyse and debate it among themselves with freedom, concern and urgency, and then present a report to the House. If the Government responds we will have better government in the country than we had before.

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

**Mr. Penner:** Hon. Members are here but have not proven very much yet. It is a little early to be patting yourselves on the back. If you do, you may have to go to an Hon. Member for chiropractic treatment.

I do not know how many citizens watch the debates of the House of Commons on television after Question Period. People who are watching this debate ought to be aware that there is a painful process involved in decision-making. It has been said a number of times this afternoon that there are several issues involved in this debate rather than a single issue. As my hon. friend from Davenport said, there are very deep and conspicuous environmental concerns which cannot be ignored. There may well be a Railway-Indian Committee working. However, the issues are so wide and numerous that that committee will need a lot of time. The people representing the corporation will have to be very sensitive. They will have to be a lot more sensitive than the CN officials whom I have encountered in my experience as a Member of Parliament, who want to run through railway towns in northern Ontario without any concern for the impact on that community or the safety issues. There are environmental issues involved but there are other concerns as well.

The Hon. Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) talked about the fishery aspect of the environmental concerns. As the Member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Belsher) pointed out, the economic impact on British Columbia is important; that cannot be denied. I am not sure whether this qualifies as a megaproject, but it is big and there are jobs involved. At a time when unemployment is high that cannot be passed over lightly. The transportation issue is involved. We need to move our goods to and from the coast in a much more economic and efficient manner than we have so far.

There is another issue which is easily forgotten and passed over. That is the rights of the aboriginal people, the first