

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

colleagues said a moment ago, we should nationalize the CPR and sell the CNR because, after all, the CPR does make a profit.

We cannot be expected to stand by and watch the CPR become amalgamated with the CNR and then end up in the same mess as the CNR is in today. All the while we see the CNR going deeper and deeper into communications, hotels and other businesses subsidized by the government and the taxpayer. We have no way of knowing, for instance, whether the money they get by way of subsidy for rail line abandonment is actually used for that program.

On the evening of March 17, a CNR train that is made up in Toronto and which travels daily to Oakville, Dundas, Brantford, London and Windsor passed through Dundas 2½ hours late. About 40 people were waiting to board the train at Dundas. The conductor called for the passengers to go to a car beyond the platform, and a little step was put down to assist them to get into the car. When they got aboard the rail car, the passengers found they were in an unheated railway baggage car. Thinking they would be moved into the passenger section, the passengers waited; the train began to move and the conductor told them to sit on the floor. This is in a central part of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Just imagine people being asked to sit on the floor of an unheated baggage car. The train arrived at Brantford some time later, when some of the passengers were transferred to a coach. The balance rode in the baggage car to London.

We have before this House a bill to grant the CNR \$13.5 million for hotels, communications, and so forth; yet they ask passengers to sit in an unheated baggage car while they transport them a distance of 70 or 80 miles. That sort of thing makes you wonder, Mr. Speaker. One of my constituents wrote to me about this and I wrote to the CTC and asked for an investigation. I also asked the president of the CNR to investigate the matter. I have written to the Minister of Transport and asked him to lend the weight of his office to my request.

If the CNR would come before parliament and say, "We are going to electrify a portion of the railway tracks over a period of years and improve interurban transportation systems," we would welcome this. Instead, they come forth and want more money for hotels and communications. If they would come before this House with a plan to eliminate level-crossings, I am sure we would give them our blessing and a good deal of the money required. If they would say, "We have a plan to move western grain to markets in a cheaper and faster way by using new technology and new methods of handling grain", and if they would say, "We will integrate our existing system with provincial and private transportation systems", then I think we would applaud them and assist them in any way we could.

If they would say, "We are going to straighten out some of the curves in the track and improve the mechanical ability of our trains so that we can utilize the unitized train concept to the best advantage", then we would give them a good hearing and our total support. If they were to take any other approach than the one they use, the approach of blackmail or of trading off one segment of their employees against another and then asking the

House to rescue them from their dilemma, then I think we would have a different attitude toward them. If they would come before us with a development plan that would be to the benefit of Canada, then I believe we could support them wholeheartedly.

However, I feel I must support the amendment moved by my colleague from Mississauga so we can try to have some measure of control over the CNR through deleting \$13.5 million of the amount provided by this bill. The Minister of Transport has said he has no power over the CNR, and if he has no power then what power has the House? What else can we do, Mr. Speaker, but to take this course of action and try to reduce part of their financing in order to bring them to task?

I think a good example of the lack of power that the minister has over the railways was given in my own riding when I approached the Canadian Transport Commission shortly after coming to parliament about a stop light and interconnecting switch in the town where I live. The town officials had written to the CTC and some nine months had elapsed without their receiving acknowledgement of their letter. I contacted CTC officials and was told, "Well, we haven't had an opportunity to review that file".

I reviewed the file in about 15 minutes and told one of the officials that we wanted this interconnecting switch put on the track so that the lights would turn red when the train was approaching and all the traffic would stop. But this did not seem to interest him. The fact that we had had a couple of fatalities at this crossing and that literally hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of property damage had been caused did not seem to influence his thinking one way or the other. The result was that we had some pretty bitter words. He told me it would take 18 months to comply, and when I applied some leverage by telling him I would go to see the Minister of Transport, he replied, "That won't do you any good; he has no authority, he has no power, over this situation". So I found out where the minister stands with the Canadian Transport Commission. However, by using some additional leverage we managed to get the switch installed within a short period of time.

These are matters that concern me. I know of municipalities who have had trouble with level-crossings. If the CNR were coming forth with a program costing \$25 million to \$30 million to eliminate some level-crossings, then I do not think any member of the House would deny them that money. But this is not the case. What we have is the CNR coming forth asking for more money for hotels and communications towers. I assume that they are trying to build up a complex that will in fact absorb some of the CNR's continuing debt.

The Minister of Transport has said that he has no control over the CNR—or over his department, I gather, is what he is really getting at. I know we have had numerous royal commissions over the years investigating the CNR. I suppose if one stacked all the royal commissions, hearings and studies end on end, they would fill quite a bit of filing-cabinet space. So far as I am aware—I have heard nothing to this effect in the House—no studies have been going on in the CNR with a view to changing or improving its situation other than becoming involved in hotels and expanding its communications system across this country.

[Mr. Kempling.]