

"I've retired from the legislative arena and you're there and I'm not going to do your work for you," he told Mr. Benjamin.

In view of the statement by the president of the Transport Commission that it was very doubtful whether he would accept my brief, I thought it only fair to present it here in the House of Commons. Indeed, in effect Mr. Pickersgill directed me to do exactly that, I believe it is only appropriate that the people I represent should be looked after to the best of our ability. The fact is that the president of the Transport Commission has already made up his mind about transportation in Canada, but he insists on repeating judgments he has made many times before. I would point out that the Supreme Court has upheld the costing formula of the C.T.C. and that branch line abandonment proposals will now be considered on the basis of that formula. As long as the Canadian Transport Commission holds its present ideas, there is no question as to what our transportation policy will be. All of us realize that the make-up of the Transport Commission is really the "gut" issue and we must look at the situation in this light.

I tried to present my statement in Regina on October 16. The commission ran out of witnesses, so we were able to get on at about 6.30 in the evening. The submission was made in the interests of good transportation generally and deferred to the plan for the rationalization of "The Canadian." I shall read from the brief:

The remarks I shall be making today will in some cases sound like mere rhetoric. If they do, I can only suggest that thousands of Canadians like myself are concerned. It is common for politicians to take so-called cheap shots or to be accused of taking cheap shots at persons, particularly officials, who cannot defend themselves.

Let me say in this regard that Mr. Pickersgill is quite capable of defending himself. The brief continues:

This may well be the reaction to what I am now going to say. The distinction I want to underline at the outset is that the subject of my remarks, the President of the Transport Commission, is here. He will react as he sees fit.

I might note, at this point, that he did react.

The burden of my comment is that he should not be hearing this case, indeed, that he should not be the President of the CTC. Clause 6 of the National Transportation Act outlines the constitution of the commission. The commissioners know it well, especially the president, because he made the transition from being the minister who marshalled the creation of the CTC through Parliament to being the first head of the commission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but perhaps I should take this opportunity to read to him part of section 157 of Beauchesne's Fourth Edition, page 132, where it is stated in paragraph 3:

It is out of order to read extracts in a debate if they... reflect upon the conduct of persons in authority.

If the hon. member continues his remarks along those lines the Chair may have to call him to order.

Mr. Skoberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But really this is no reflection on the character of a member, nor will there be from here on. I am reading from my own brief; I am not referring to a debate.

The Address—Mr. Skoberg

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The citation says it is out of order to read extracts in a debate if they reflect upon the conduct of persons in authority. It was my impression that the hon. member was reading extracts which might reflect upon the conduct of the president of the Canadian Transport Commission who holds a position of authority.

Mr. Skoberg: I was not quoting any outside authority in this regard, but I will take what Your Honour has said into consideration and continue to refer to my brief. It continues:

Clause 6 states that "each commissioner holds office during good behaviour...but he may be removed for cause by the governor in council at any time."

I have asked the government directly to relieve the president of his duties.

I have a letter here which will confirm this. I am awaiting a reply. My immediate reason for making such a request centres on the statements made by the president since he became president, and some of his staff, which indicate to me and others that the opinions he holds regarding the future of passenger service on the railways are prejudicial to a fair and neutral judgment on his part in respect of arguments put forward by anyone who questions the policy and the methods adopted by the railways to get themselves out of the passenger business.

● (5:30 p.m.)

I believe it is a more complex and serious situation than that. I believe strongly that the former Minister of Transport should never have taken the job and, further, that it was a grave error in common sense for any government to have offered the post. I said in my brief:

To amplify, I came into politics as a Member of Parliament after the president had made his leap from the Commons to his present judicial function. Before coming to Ottawa I had no fixed opinion as to his competence or fairness beyond a memory that on two occasions as a minister of the Crown he failed to act in situations and seemed to reflect a pro-management bias. I refer firstly to the fact that as government House leader in 1963 he effectively blocked House consideration of recommendations of the Commons Railways, Canals and Telegraph Committee that the Railway Act should be amended to place upon the railroad the responsibility for dislocation costs of workers as a result of technological innovations. Later as Minister of Transport he brushed aside the recommendations of the committee in as specious and circuitous a speech as I have ever read.

I have that speech here, which I can refer to. Then I said:

Secondly, in 1963 discontent of the running trades on the CNR over management plans to introduce run-throughs led to a national wildcat strike. Beforehand representatives of the men could get no sympathetic response from railway management or government ministers. At the same time the president was Minister of Transport. His unwillingness to listen and to act led directly to the strike and subsequent appointment of the Freedman inquiry. Surely one fair opinion one can draw from the recommendations coming from that inquiry is that there were substantial grievances and views to which the then minister turned a deaf ear. So the memory of these two cases and the president's role in them were all that I brought to Ottawa with me in 1968 in so far as he is concerned.

I quickly found in Ottawa that the president's name among politicians of all parties was synonymous with partisan chicanery