

Supply—Transport

An hon. Member: Let us get back to the railways.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I do not think that I should attempt to give any elaboration at this time, on the first item of these estimates, of a national transportation policy. I do think that I will take the advice of the hon. member for Saint John-Albert and I will try, in presenting my estimates for 1966-67, to give an elaboration on the basis of the foundation that I referred to tonight. I know that a number of specific points have been raised in the debate. However, looking at the clock I see that I have exhausted my time.

An hon. Member: Go ahead.

Mr. Pickersgill: Are hon. members willing to let me go ahead?

Some hon. Members: Go ahead.

Mr. Pickersgill: I will try to deal with some of these specific points which have been raised, and I think that perhaps I should begin with a self-denying ordinance. I do not think it would be appropriate for me at this stage, for two reasons, to discuss the question which I think has been discussed more than any other on my estimates.

• (9:30 p.m.)

As hon. members know, the management of the Canadian Pacific are coming here as soon as the transport committee wishes to call them, and the terms of reference of that committee are very wide. I would hope—and I share this hope with the hon. member for Timiskaming—that we will confine ourselves to the question of passenger services and not spread ourselves all over the lot. I agree that if we choose to do the latter, the committee is likely to be far less productive than if we deal entirely with the very serious problem of passenger services—and it is a very serious problem.

Nevertheless, I do not think I shall say anything about it tonight, for two reasons. First, as hon. members know, there are a number of petitions lodged with the governor in council appealing against the decision to cancel the "Dominion". I am a member of the cabinet which will have to consider these appeals and I think it would be improper for me at this stage to prejudge the case before hearings have taken place. And I do not think I could talk about passenger services in general without seeming, at any rate, to prejudge the case. I think it would be better if I simply noted this matter.

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Mr. Douglas: Before the minister leaves that point, could I ask him whether there is necessarily any relationship between the two matters? I mean the passenger service generally, to be considered by the Committee on Transportation, and the question of the "Dominion" which is going before the cabinet. I take it that the latter will not be held up pending some decision on the former question.

Mr. Pickersgill: I do not think that is likely to arise, provided the committee proceeds with reasonable dispatch. One of the petitions, the petition from the government of Alberta, arrived only a short time ago. Indeed, I first saw it today. There has not been time to consider it yet. Then again, we have had notice that there will be one or two further petitioners and I do not think any attempt will be made to reach a decision until we have all the petitions in front of us. As to whether or not we should make a decision before the committee has completed its consideration of the passenger service, I would say there are arguments on both sides. I do not think I should give an answer on that matter tonight; I think I should consult my colleagues.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Would the minister keep in mind that some of these delegations from western cities are coming here, presumably, to make an appearance before the committee which is considering the affairs of the C.P.R., but also to interview cabinet ministers in connection with the appeal?

Mr. Pickersgill: I do not think this will present a problem. The mayor of Moose Jaw, who is spokesman for eight or ten cities across the prairies has indicated clearly that they are not appealing the decision about the "Dominion" but are coming to make representations to the cabinet about passenger service generally. There would not necessarily be a conflict. Nevertheless there is an awkward problem and at the moment, I do not feel I can give an adequate answer.

Mr. Smallwood: Would the minister permit a question? The argument I advanced yesterday in this debate was that the railroads were not delivering the grain to the ports. After I had finished speaking the minister gave us certain figures covering the last six weeks—the number of cars loaded on the prairies and the number of cars unloaded at the ports. On adding up these figures I found