

CNR and Air Canada

sion, the CNR and this government to eliminate this rail-way service, as well as many others.

We have raised this matter from time to time with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) who has not poked his nose in the House since this debate started. He is supposed to be piloting this bill through the House. When we raise the question with the minister he says it is a matter for the Canadian National Railways and because it is a Crown corporation he cannot interfere. Then, when we raise the question with the minister again, he says the matter has been reported to the Canadian Transport Commission and he cannot interfere because the Canadian Transport Commission is a regulatory body which has a particular type of omnipotence. Then, if you go to the Canadian Transport Commission they say they have no authority because the act states that they must behave in a certain manner. Because the CNR is afraid to offend the minister, because the Canadian Transport Commission is a creature of the minister and because the minister refuses to become involved in these problems since other agencies have jurisdiction, the end result is that jointly the minister, the Canadian Transport Commission and the CNR are carrying out a process of downgrading rail services. They have already eliminated completely rail service in one province. We will fight this decision as long as we have breath.

• (1530)

We have already indicated earlier in the week what we have done. In 1968, when the decision to abandon the service was brought before the Canadian Transport Commission, we protested against it. Our people did so unanimously. We considered that Canadian National should have moved in, upgraded the railbed and cleaned up the cars. Nobody would have believed how calculating the CNR people were. They are not even in their usual place in the gallery today listening to the complaints, because they do not pay any attention to them anyway. The fact is that for about two years prior to the abandonment of the railway passenger service in 1968, the CNR deliberately started the downgrading process. They did not clean the cars on the outside, and the inside was repulsive to anybody who wished to get on board one of these trains. The end result was that people stopped using the service.

After a couple of years of this, the CNR decided that they had sufficient statistics to show that the number of passengers using the service was reduced, so they applied to the Canadian Transport Commission for permission to abandon that rail line and the CTC agreed. We have never been able to uncover the reasons for this decision, but I hope that one day, with a new government in Canada which will face the facts honestly and openly, we can bring the czar of transportation before a committee of the House. I am referring to the man who is now in the \$40,000 a year job as president of the CTC. This person should give sworn testimony before an appropriate committee where he might admit that there was some kind of plot between the then provincial premier, the CTC and the then minister of transport to eliminate the rail passenger service. There had to be some agreement among them. Perhaps the provincial government at that time said, if you help us with the trans-Canada highway or give us a

[Mr. Lundrigan.]

grant of so many millions of dollars, we will not oppose the abandonment of the system.

Unless there is some skulduggery behind the scenes, there is no way in which the CTC can justify its decision in 1968 to abandon one railway system in one province which had a deficit of less than \$1 million, and refuse to abandon railway systems in two other provinces which had deficits of \$15 million a year. We agree that the rail passenger service which serves Nova Scotia and New Brunswick should be maintained and upgraded, because it serves as a vital passenger link with the heartland of the nation. However, you cannot say, on the one hand, that one system is to be abandoned which had deficits of less than \$1 million and which served one province, while another system having a deficit of \$15 million and serving two other provinces with a population a little more than twice as big as the province of Newfoundland should be maintained. Something must have gone wrong somewhere. The transportation system in Newfoundland is not a minor thing; it is of major importance. We in the Atlantic region have need of an efficient, well serviced and cheap transportation system that will link us with the central industrialized parts of Canada because we are far from central Canada and we must have good transportation.

Back in the nineteenth century Canada said that tariff systems and trade policies would be designed which would encourage the growth of the less industrialized parts of Canada. We agreed with that. At the same time, the Atlantic region was left in the position of depending basically on raw resources, so we are in great need of a system whereby our products can be brought to the large population centres of the world and certainly to the large population centres of our nation. Therefore, much more emphasis must be placed on rail transportation.

My colleagues from Nova Scotia have commented on the increased freight rates in the Atlantic region. There have been several increases in the last few years and another one is to take place in a few weeks time. There is no way in which you can carry on an effective policy of regional development in the Atlantic region in the face of this kind of discrimination. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that members from western Canada must have the same attitude because this is one of their great disadvantages. I have listened to my friends in the cattle industry, such as the distinguished and honoured member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner), as well as other hon. members speak about their need for a reassessment of the freight rates and about the cost of transporting their produce to the heartland of Canada.

These are the kinds of things which we would like the CN to consider. The attitude of the people in managerial positions in the CN is rooted in the eighteenth century. They do not understand the word "service". They dislike any innovation, change or progress. If you speak to these people now you will find that they have not heard of the word "service" except in areas where they have brand new, sophisticated systems serving perhaps a few of the heavily populated central Canadian areas. These people are still treating the rail system as the traditional mode of transportation, and in many cases the only mode of transportation, but they have not kept up with the times.