

*Transportation*

country? Was it to protest loudly and publicly that the opposition is holding up the business of the house? Or did he wish to shock the house so that it would hastily pass a piece of legislation deserving the most thorough scrutiny?

• (5:10 p.m.)

That is the procedure to which we have always taken exception, ever since we came here, and we entreat the government to stop playing this game, for although I have drawn the attention of the house to the present bill, I could say as much for other measures, for the government has taken wicked pleasure in using this weapon.

Canada is a vast country and it seems even bigger as in the course of the present debate one hears the different opinions of various parts of the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific and particularly as one becomes aware of the different worries and many needs of the various economic regions. In fact, I think it might be preferable to have a definite law for each region in the country.

Therefore, I hope the hon. minister, who is certainly full of good will, as may be seen from his patience in listening to all our opinions and his determination in answering all our questions as clearly as possible, may give this direction to the business of the house.

Often, it is not his explanations which seem obscure, but the economic complexity and diversity of various regions which make it difficult to implement legislation.

In some parts of Canada, all modes of transport are operating simultaneously and seem to be in competition with one another while in some others, there is neither the number nor the competition, yet, all citizens are entitled to the same justice.

For instance, in my riding of Roberval, the activities are far less numerous than in large cities, since we make shift with the C.N.R. and private trucking. We hope that with the new act, the Roberval-Lake St. John valley will be looked upon as deserving more attention than it has received in the past.

As far as the Canadian National is concerned, I should not like this bill to permit the Canadian Transport Commission to simply eliminate the Chambord-Dolbeau branch line. I am notifying the hon. minister because the C.N.R. authorities have already tried to greatly reduce the freight service by suggesting the closing of certain stations in rural areas.

[Mr. Gauthier.]

Of course, I am not afraid of the branch line being eliminated, for the C.N.R. knows very well, in view of freight level and logging companies and so on, that this branch line is the most economical in eastern Canada in relation to its run.

But, it is on passenger service that I wish to call the attention of the minister. Certain young Montreal technocrats, who came to the area, will try to satisfy the commission that the operation of that passenger train is uneconomical. But I can assure you that it is so because the most important point of all was overlooked: service. Indeed, if users in Montreal, Ottawa or Toronto were to receive the same treatment as those of the Lake St. John-Roberval area the "intermetropolitan" trains would be empty.

Once it has been decided that a line is uneconomical, it is not so stated overnight. They do precisely as the Canadian National authorities are now doing, in my area. They start by removing the postal service, thus taking a capital daily revenue from the express service. They gradually abandon the express service to individuals, to such a point that we now have left but one express car, and they even talk about removing it. And because not a single dollar was spent on improving passenger service in the last 30 years, because there is a preference for building skyscraper hotels in large centres, the future commission will be directed to take away the last passenger train, while the former users will still be obliged to foot the bill for the follies committed in large centres. Such is the sorry lot of our remote areas.

In order to remedy this situation, I suggest that commissioners should be chosen in remote areas rather than in large cities; for instance, they should be chosen among the chairmen of great farm co-operatives in the province or in all other provinces, the labour leaders, county council associations, etc., since the law will, after all, be administered by the commissioners. Therefore, we must act at that level in order to assure equal justice.

After freezing the arbitrary decisions of the Canadian National authorities until this bill is passed, we now ask the government to make a sensible choice of commissioners.

In our area, the track itself should be completely rebuilt. That is what is most urgently needed. Then, there are the passenger coaches. The minister must convince the C.N.R. management, since we failed to do it, that the coaches for the Chambord-Dolbeau