

CNR and Air Canada

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): That is right, but you also find many people who have no alternative mode of travel. There are not many who travel because they choose to use the railways.

Mr. Woolliams: Only when there are strikes.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mostly during strikes, that is true. They do so out of desperation, I presume. No effort is made to make the trip an enjoyable event in itself, whether in terms of housekeeping facilities and general level of hospitality—if I may put it that way—aboard the railroads, or in terms of some diversion or entertainment while aboard.

It is a rather fascinating piece of Canadian history that when radio broadcasting was first developed in this country, which was in the 1920s, one of the first places a person could listen to the radio was while sitting in the lounge car of a railroad train.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A CNR train.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): A CNR train, that is correct.

Mr. Woolliams: Both you and Stan are about the same age!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Yes, he is just reminding me of that. As I was saying, it is fascinating to realize that radio, that new and exciting means of communication, found its first home aboard a railroad car. What imaginative and daring people must have existed in the 1920s who not only placed radios in lounge cars but even began the first radio network. This was certainly an imaginative step to be taken by such daring individuals in the 1920s.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): With an operator to keep them in good shape, too.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I am reminded that there was an operator to keep them tuned in to the best programs of the day. Where are all the men of imagination and daring of the 1920s? I can only conclude they are 50 years older and are still sitting at the desks they were sitting at in the 1920s, never having had a new idea since. Who would think of doing such a dangerous and daring thing as placing a television set or a movie screen aboard a railroad car? That would be unheard of. Or who would think of supplying a stewardess?

Mr. Woolliams: Or even a janitor to clean up the floor.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): These are suggestions that must boggle the imagination of anyone who is responsible for passenger traffic on our railroads today. What has happened to all the old ideas? Or is it considered improper for a national institution like a railroad to do anything to entertain the traveller on short or long trips other than providing him with a *Reader's Digest* that is six months old or with bingo at ten o'clock? Certainly, this seems to be the sum total of their imagination at the present time. Somewhere in the dim and dark past the railroad apparently discovered that bingo was a good thing.

Mr. Woolliams: CPA have *Playboy* now.

[Mr. Peters.]

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Well, I will not get into that. Bingo is a good thing and the railroads feel it is an exciting diversion that satisfies every predilection of the travelling public. What utter, transparent nonsense!

I think it is time that somehow, somewhere, there be thorough shake-up of the individual and collective imaginations behind our nation's railroads. Perhaps in a way this is what the Canadian Transport Commission is trying to do when it suggests that the time has come for the general public to give its views on how the railroads tackle such things as the routing of trains, frequency of service, connections, times of departure, methods of providing meals, methods and cost of providing sleeping car service, fare levels, improved reservations and a whole host of other things that I will not bother to go into now. I sincerely hope that prior to the deadline announced by the commission of April 15, 1972, the general public in the Maritimes and Atlantic provinces inundate the Canadian Transport Commission with all kinds of suggestions.

The only place where there seems to be any kind of imagination shown, any suggestion that people might actually enjoy themselves while travelling on a train, is in these high-priced, glossy magazine advertisement that we see, or in some of the television commercials depicting happy, smiling, joking families having such a wonderful time aboard a railroad train in the dining car or lounge car. It is never made quite clear what they are enjoying, but obviously they are enjoying something. Perhaps it is time to call the bluff of the corporate bosses and ask them what the railroad plans to do to make passenger travel an exciting prospect for both long distance and short distance travellers.

• (2100)

Things are so bad in terms of the ability of the railways to adjust to the needs of passenger traffic that in Ontario the province is developing its own railroad to serve mass transit needs. The Go-transit system is Ontario's answer to failures on the part of the CNR. There are many examples of these shortcomings. One thinks of the commuter service operating between Ottawa and Montreal. I am not a regular user of this service but many members of this House are, and from time to time we hear laments, private and public, about the shortcomings of that service. Surely suggestions for improving it have been passed along often enough to merit a response.

I wish to turn now to another aspect of the responsibilities of the Canadian National, namely, the operation of the ferry service between Prince Edward Island and the mainland. There are few things of more vital concern to a Member of Parliament from Prince Edward Island than the efficiency of this ferry service. I do not want to be completely negative in my approach. I want to take this opportunity to say that one of the best things done by the CNR in connection with the service has been the complete structural change in terminal facilities at both Borden and Tormentine. The arrangements for both passengers and freight now represent a vast improvement over any we have previously known. This is an important development in providing a more humane and effective method of travelling to and from Prince Edward Island from the mainland.