

Canadian National Railways

amendment have failed to provide for any alternative. I maintain that the proposal in its present terms is unrealistic and that it ought not, therefore, to be supported.

Hon. James Richardson (Minister without Portfolio): I should like to say first of all in replying to the debate that as acting minister of transport I am responsible for this legislation. I have the complete concurrence of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer) and what I say here reflects his views as well as those of the Department of Transport.

I should like to say, further, that all questions which were put during the committee stage were answered, and that the particular question which is being discussed now on third reading about employment in the local area was answered by me. I said I was in agreement with the general thought that local people should be employed. I undertook, also, to refer this matter to the officials of the Canadian National. I shall go further at this point and say I shall be pleased to send copies of the letters I shall write in this regard to hon. members who have raised this matter, that is copies of the letters I intend to write to the Canadian National in this regard.

As to the point which has been raised in connection with the Great Slave Railway, I suggest that this has no bearing on the legislation we are considering today. The difficulties which arose under that contract should properly be discussed when the affairs of the C.N.R. are before the appropriate standing committee of the house, not during the passage of another piece of legislation.

I should like to conclude by saying that this legislation really boils down to something very simple. There are two new sulphur recovery plants in the Alberta gas field west of Windfall and in order to remove the sulphur and the liquid petroleum gas produced by these plants the two companies involved have entered into long term traffic guarantee contracts with the C.N.R. These contracts not only pay for the construction of this new branch line but cover all operating costs, and also, as confirmed by officials of the railway, they provide a surplus to the Canadian National. Construction of this line is therefore clearly in the interest of the railway and therefore in the interests of the Canadian taxpayer.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Would the minister permit a question before he ends his remarks? The hon. gentleman has indicated he will be prepared to make available his

communications to the C.N.R. in connection with this employment question. Would he also make available the replies received from the railway company so that we may know what reaction is forthcoming?

Mr. Richardson: I do not believe I can undertake to reveal the correspondence of another party. I will reveal my own correspondence.

Mr. Schreyer: I was wondering whether I could ask the minister a question.

Mr. Speaker: Is the minister prepared to receive an additional question?

Mr. Richardson: Yes.

Mr. Schreyer: What the minister has said is reasonable enough. Since he has stated that the subject matter of the Great Slave Railway and claims arising therefrom could properly be raised before the standing committee, will he undertake to have this subject matter placed before the standing committee on transport and communications?

Mr. Richardson: I assume that the responsibility for bringing that matter forward would rest upon those who are concerned about the matter. I simply said that the committee was the place where a matter of that kind ought to be considered, rather than in the house during the passage of this legislation.

Mr. Schreyer: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I have to remind hon. members that we are no longer in committee. We are on third reading and we should not return to the type of discussion or debate which is normal during the committee stage of a bill.

Mr. Schreyer: I rise on a point of order. The minister indicated that whoever was concerned with this matter of the Great Slave Railway should bring it before the committee. But since it is the rule that only the minister can refer subject matters to the standing committee I ask him whether he would be prepared to do so. It is his prerogative.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a point of order. It is an argument about the interpretation of the rules of the house.

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): The minister has given an assurance to the house that he will bring this principle in relation to local employment to the attention of the Canadian National, and this gives us some cause for rejoicing.