

Provision of Moneys to CNR and Air Canada

Draws MPs Fire—Said Exterminating Service." This time last year when we tried to point out to the House that the CNR was starting to exterminate its passenger services, hon. members got the idea that we were trying to provide entertainment. There was the "Newfie Bullet" bit, and people regarded it as a great joke. But some of the people who regarded it as a joke a year ago are making very great speeches now. They are disturbed.

Take the example of the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin). He is actually angered by the CNR's plan to reduce service to northern New Brunswick. But if anybody refers to the evidence put before the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications during its proceedings last year, he will see that the same hon. member came forward almost as a champion of the CNR, as a champion of his government, as a champion of the CTC, and as a champion of Jack Pickersgill who runs the CTC. Questions to the witnesses were framed in such a way that they were defending everything that was going on. Some hon. members did not have sense enough to realize that this was a trial balloon being flown by the CNR, although this fact was very aptly pointed out by my colleague the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). Don't tell me they were not warned, Mr. Speaker. My colleague from St. John's East, with that foresight of his that almost approaches clairvoyance—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Peddle: —said on November 28, 1968, as recorded in the proceedings of the transport committee:

Mr. Chairman, I repeat with great respect we are not interested in this solely for the reason of trying to set aside this decision—

He was speaking of the decision to abandon our railway passenger service.

—desirable to some as that may be, but there is a precedent being set here, a very dangerous precedent. What is to stop the Commission from going all across the country and abandoning services in all of the provinces if they are not paying? This is the point that we are concerned with here. They have set a precedent and we want to examine it to see if it is a good precedent because we do not think it is.

How much warning do they want, Mr. Speaker?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Peddle: If we had drawn the same eloquence and the same articulation from hon. members last year, if they had opposed

[Mr. Peddle.]

this move to deprive a whole province of railway passenger service, if hon. members had been nearly as eloquent and articulate as they are now, when this policy is hitting home in their own ridings, it is quite possible that the abandonment plans in Newfoundland would have been discarded and we would not now be faced with applications for abandonment.

Everybody is disturbed now. All around me I hear people saying that it does not matter if the CNR is making a profit or not; it has to provide service. But they could not, or would not, recognize the trial balloon that the CNR flew in Newfoundland, and so we have the situation we are faced with today. However, there is one difference. In the first case just one small province was involved, but all the people of Canada are now involved in the applications to abandon railway passenger service.

I am going to watch developments in connection with these applications, Mr. Speaker, and if I see that political expediency enters into the matter and these applications are set aside, whereas our appeal against similar applications in Newfoundland was ignored, you can expect in this House and outside it a noise that will be heard all the way from here to Mexico City.

There is talk of separatism in Canada. This talk started in Quebec. Now we hear the rumble of separatism out west. If we in Atlantic Canada continue to be discriminated against, I suggest there may well be a mild grumble of separatism from the east. We in Newfoundland were the last ones to enter confederation, which might make it a little easier for us to get out.

Some hon. Members: When?

Mr. Peddle: Under the circumstances it might be better for us to be a foreign country; then we could apply for some of this fancy foreign aid and do a lot better. We lend money to South America and to Africa to build railways, but with a snap of the fingers we take away railway passenger service from a whole province in our own country.

● (8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, no doubt some of these applications will eventually be referred to the transport committee. I feel that the Newfoundland situation was very shoddily dealt with inside and outside this Parliament, in committee, and in the CTC by my good old friend from Newfoundland, Jack Pickersgill. I