

Committee on Railways and Shipping

be dependent upon the whims of United States capitalists. This would be an investment by Canadians in a wholly Canadian project to serve Canadians for generations to come.

Mr. O. C. Trainor (Winnipeg South): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on this motion. Some time ago I placed a question on the order paper, as follows:

1. What offers, if any, have been received by the Canadian National Railways for their various hotels listed for sale?

2. What terms of payment are suggested in respect of these offers?

3. What is the appraised value of each of these properties, if such appraisals are available?

I received an answer to the first part of my question giving the details with respect to two hotels. In answering the second part of the question I was told that it was inadvisable, in the light of the policy of the railroad, to disclose such information. In reply to the third part I was told that the information was not available.

I have no particular objection to this type of answer, provided the Canadian National Railways are prepared to stand on their own feet. Who owns this railroad? Does the Minister of Transport, or does the government, or do the people of Canada own it? If the people of Canada own it, then I submit the people of Canada have a right to this information and neither the minister nor the government have any right to deny them information that is vital, especially in view of the fact that the Canadian National Railways are coming to the people of Canada to make up their deficit. Still they refuse to give the people of Canada simple information as to how they are conducting the affairs of the railroad.

There might possibly be some objection to disclosing this information if the negotiations for sale were in the process of being carried on, but that was not the case. In the case of the two hotels referred to the negotiations had been completed, and there was no conceivable reason for denying such information.

Apparently the Canadian National Railways are developing into something in the nature of a sacred cow as far as the government are concerned. One cannot get any information about the operations of this railroad. There does not seem to be any logical explanation for this attitude. If it was a question of effective competition perhaps one could understand it, but these were cases in which no such factor was involved. Personally I do not see any particular reason why such information should be denied.

Rumours have been rife in Winnipeg and vicinity that the Canadian National Railways were disposing of these hotel properties

at fire sale prices. This may or may not be true, but if it is not true I would suggest that the best way for the minister to disabuse the minds of those who so think would be to disclose the information, more especially in view of the fact that no particular purpose would be served by refusing to do so.

I have in mind another instance of this peculiar attitude on the part of the government with regard to giving out information. Some time ago I asked why the government would not allow Winnipeg and area citizens to travel to Europe over the trans-polar route by way of Scandinavian Airlines. The answer I received was that there was no reciprocal arrangement. I suggested that perhaps they might be able to negotiate such an arrangement, but no reply was given to that suggestion. When I attempted to pursue the matter further I did not get very far.

Here is an instance in which the convenience of the travelling public is involved. One would think the first objective and even the duty of the government would be to promote the public interest and public convenience. Do they do that? No. Apparently they want to reserve this route for Trans-Canada Air Lines, and are prepared to go so far as to force a person residing in Winnipeg to travel to Montreal over Trans-Canada and then take Trans-Canada overseas to Europe, whereas he could get in an aeroplane in his own backyard, so to speak, and be in Europe in eight hours. As far as I can gather the minister is the only citizen of Canada who has had the privilege of traveling this route, and he is not prepared to extend that privilege to his fellow citizens.

The hon. member for Hastings South made what to me at least was an interesting suggestion, and this was commented upon by the hon. member for Kootenay West. This was a proposal to have Canadian National Railways build a trans-Canada pipe line on their own right of way. This is a suggestion that could come only from a Liberal.

In the first place the geography is all wrong. The major gas distribution in western Canada happens to be along the line of the Canadian Pacific. The Canadian National right of way is some hundred miles or so to the north, which would mean another hundred miles or more of extra pipe line to be constructed. If one has travelled over the right of way of the Canadian National Railways from east to west, as I have, he cannot help but be struck by the type of country through which the line travels. How in the world would you expect to sell any gas along that line?

In the first place this line would not be able to buy any gas in western Canada,