

Canadian National Railways Act

country because the Liberal cabinet did not contain a minister from that province. I suggested that if that province was ignored when these extra five directors were appointed, there would be a storm from the province, particularly as that province is as much concerned with the operations of the Canadian National Railways—which is the only railway in that province; it is one of the two provinces where the C.P.R. does not operate—as any other province except one, and the other one is of course Newfoundland.

I am quite sure that if there are to be 12 directors and there is no director chosen from Newfoundland, that will not be very well viewed in that province. I am quite sure this will be true of every province. At least three voices have been raised from the province of Alberta already to put in a claim for a director from that province.

What my hon. friend from Laurier said is quite true. I am not saying there would be anything essentially or necessarily wrong with having a director from every province, but we have had a great deal of experience with Canadian National Railways over the years, and there does seem to have been for a long period now, under two governments—for four years under the present government—a view that with seven directors the broad regional aspects of the country have been reasonably represented.

As my hon. friend from Laurier said, this does seem to be an odd time to be changing that policy, when there are so many really urgent things that need to be done. I think we have reasonable ground for expressing disquietude about the reasons given by hon. gentlemen opposite. I exclude the minister from that, but I refer to the minister's friends in their support of this bill. They are not really supporting it because they want five more directors. They rise to support it and spend all their time attacking the present management of the Canadian National Railways. If they want to attack the management of the Canadian National Railways, that is their business; but I might point out that the former minister of transport (Mr. Hees) said over and over again that he was completely satisfied with the present management of the Canadian National Railways and with the present situation with regard to the board of directors.

The present minister has never said a word in criticism of the management since he became Minister of Transport or since he became a minister. I believe my hon. friend from Laurier did say yesterday—I have not the reference here—that the minister may have been critical of the Canadian National Railways when he was sitting over here, but I am not attempting to dredge that matter

up at all. The minister has been in office for some months now, and I have never heard one word pass his lips in criticism of the management of the railways. Indeed, it seems to me that on one or two occasions he has ascribed to the management of the railways responsibilities which are not theirs at all. However, that would introduce a separate topic, which I do not seek to do because I find within the scope of this bill plenty of things to say without going outside it.

I say that if the purpose of this bill is to undermine the management of the C.N.R., we should not be considering it at all. If the government are not satisfied with the management of the C.N.R. they should change it; they should not seek by this kind of device to undermine it. That is no way to run any kind of business. I think it is about time the government did make a firm statement, in view of the things that have been said by hon. gentlemen opposite, about what they do intend to do with the management of the Canadian National Railways.

Is the purpose of this bill to introduce five directors who will harass the management; who will undermine the management of the railways; who will act, if you like, as spies for hon. gentlemen over there? Is that the purpose of it? That seemed to be implied in some of the things we have heard about this bill. I suspect, having regard to the kind of appointments this government has made to far too many boards and commissions since it came into office, that this bill has an entirely different purpose. I suspect, as I said yesterday—

Mr. Macdonnell: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. gentleman permit a question?

Mr. Pickersgill: Certainly.

Mr. Macdonnell: Might I ask the hon. gentleman how long he thinks it is necessary to talk to prove that this bill is utterly irrelevant and that we should not be dealing with it at all? I am interested in the length of time he feels it necessary to talk on this matter.

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. gentleman has a good point. The hon. gentleman is suggesting that I should not emulate his colleague the Minister of Finance and use a sledgehammer to drive home a tack. I think he is right, and I do not think I will be spending very much more time on this topic. However, I was in the middle of a point yesterday which I would have made in two minutes had I had the two minutes and had I not ceded them to the hon. member for Vancouver South so he could take exception to something I said.

My point is this. I suspect, having regard to the precedents of the last four years, the