

Rail Transport

assume that through this study they are simply trying to hide that fact.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Guay) is in the chamber. He will remember a group which came to Ottawa. Indeed, the parliamentary secretary was very gracious in receiving them. On that occasion, I suggested somewhat uncharitably that this was just more windowdressing. The parliamentary secretary took great umbrage when I made that suggestion. I do not think he realizes it was born from the frustration, helplessness and hopelessness of the people in my area and the area surrounding.

We heard, before someone managed to keep him quiet, a few words from a member of the CTC who sat in on that meeting. He told us that at that time the study was about two thirds completed. That was months ago and we did not hear anything more about it until last week when it was indicated we might get the results of this study next week or the week after.

My concern is this. Since we first heard about the birth of this study, it has been indicated that local people would be consulted. I presumed the local people would be people in my constituency or surrounding constituencies. This is a very elusive animal, the local people who are to be consulted. I cannot find one in my constituency. I have checked with almost every municipal official, elected or appointed, in my constituency. Not one has talked to the CTC. The CTC has never talked to them. I would hope that when this study is tabled, if it is ever tabled, there will be appended to it the names of those people who were consulted by the CTC in connection with it.

● (1710)

I am by nature an optimist, though at times it is very difficult to remain an optimist, especially when one is dealing with rail transportation in my area. Let me point out one thing—and I do so with considerable reluctance. From the birth of this issue to this very day there has never, to my knowledge, been inserted into the debate one iota of partisan politics. Everyone has been in favour of the improvements we are seeking—everyone, that is, except the railways, the CTC and the minister. The conclusion to which one is inevitably drawn is this: the attitude the minister continues to take, together with the discontinuance of the service, reflects the only way he knows of penalizing the people in this area who have failed to elect Liberal members since 1968, the only exception being the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher)—and it certainly is not his fault that geographically his constituency is isolated by water and by ridings represented by Tory or NDP members. I can well understand why he spoke with such vigor and dedication on October 27. It seems to me that the people who live in this area have been witnessing political patronage in reverse. It amounts to telling them: if you don't send Liberals to Ottawa you will not get passenger trains. It is incredible to me that in this area of non-partisanship the minister should take such an attitude. With reluctance, as I say, this is the only conclusion I can draw.

Mr. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, this motion asks that the government consider the advisability of

[Mr. Jarvis.]

taking all necessary steps to reinstate rail passenger service in southwestern Ontario adequate to the present and anticipated transportation needs of the public.

The government is in full accord with this motion. However, the motion is not really necessary, because the government is already studying the anticipated transportation needs of southwestern Ontario and is, in fact, considering the advisability of reinstating passenger rail service. Both the minister and the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) have repeatedly expressed concern about this matter. As has been mentioned, the hon. member for Bruce has frequently made representations to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), to the CTC and to myself. I should like to say to the hon. member who has just resumed his seat the information given in our various discussions had nothing to do with politics; we spoke with simple sincerity because we are concerned about the people in his area just as we are concerned about people everywhere in Canada.

An hon. Member: Like the devil, you are!

Mr. Lundrigan: Don't cry!

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): I am always pleased to hear comments from members of the Official Opposition. But some of them may have noted that their leader has just walked into the House. They do not realize that he came in to listen to me rather than listen to them.

I repeat, the government is very concerned that southwestern Ontario should get the best and most suitable surface transport systems. The immediate question is to determine how this objective can best be achieved. Both the Canadian Transport Commission and the Ontario government are currently in the midst of separate major studies to this end. It may be the case that reinstating rail passenger service is part, or all, of the solution. It may not. We cannot at this stage prejudice the conclusions which will be reached as a result of these studies.

The Minister of Transport has not simply let this matter rest with the studies currently under way. On June 14 of this year, along with officials of the department, I met with a delegation from southwestern Ontario, as the hon. member for Perth-Wilmot (Mr. Jarvis) will recall, and listened to representations on this matter. The consensus of this meeting was that the next Ontario trilevel conference would offer the most appropriate opportunity for the discussion of this question, and that a solution could be found through the co-operation of the three levels of government concerned.

As to the background of this issue, I think it would be very useful if I were to put a few facts on the record. But before doing so, I assure the hon. member, as I have done on several occasions, that as soon as these reports are available, we shall actively pursue this matter. I am not being "political". I am just being sincere, and answering the question he has raised on various occasions. I should like to refer, also, to the Standing Committee which visited the hon. member's area. This visit was made possible because the hon. member for London East (Mr. Turner) voted against other members on our side, if you want to put it that way. He took this action because he felt there was a need to do so, and I compliment him. Had it not been