

Provision of Moneys to CNR and Air Canada

now an application before the CTC asking it to approve the building by a foreign-owned railway of an 80-mile road link from Elk Valley, British Columbia, in order to ship Canadian coal through the United States, thereby avoiding the CNR. Ultimately the coal will be shipped to Japan through the port of Roberts Bank. How would a national transportation policy affect this decision, Mr. Speaker? I think if we had a policy which would discourage an application such as this, it would affect the health of our rail system markedly.

What is this government's option for private transportation, which I have attempted to illustrate, really doing? It is contributing to the costs so markedly that Bill C-7 will look like peanuts compared to the one our successors will have to consider 20 years from now. Therefore, we do not change our ways. In the long run there is no alternative, Mr. Speaker, to a publicly-owned and co-ordinated transportation system where each service is considered in terms of the people it serves, whether it is rail, bus or air. We cannot expect a solution until we begin to think about these things. In the short run, however, we seem to be doing our best to destroy our rail service.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I shall not detain you nor the House long on this important matter. Although brevity in speeches is a fairly subjective concept to our audience we are never as brief as we think we are to ourselves. I am happy to hear the arrangements that have been made in this legislation and I endorse the spirit. I do not think there is any reason why there should have been surprise that this particular measure has provoked a good deal of debate.

Down through the years in this Parliament representatives of the people have been concerned with and have been involved in long discussions about railways. One of my less illustrious political ancestors once said very simply, "Railways are my politics." That was Sir Allan MacNab. It is interesting that today we in Parliament are talking about railways and for a part of the day governments were in the old railway station talking about Canada—I presume; I was not there. It is symbolic, too, that those discussions are being moved farther and farther away from this particular institution.

Clearly railways are still fundamental to the economy of the country, to the politics of the country in the broad and, I suppose at

[Mr. Rose.]

times, even the narrow meaning of the word politics. The debate demonstrated that, and I think it has been an interesting debate. In Prince Edward Island, railways have always been important matters, even before it became a province, and since. Indeed, if we make a confession of history, railways had a lot to do with our becoming a province. We hoped that the Dominion would bail us out but the bailing out job was protracted and incomplete.

I should like to touch on one or two points of our continuing problem and the current question. I was much impressed by one part of the statement made by the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Rose) in connection with telecommunications. It seems to me that since there was a CN-CP merger the efficiency of telegraph services across this country has diminished.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macquarrie: This is a very, very serious matter. We talk about being in the satellite age and yet we find it so difficult to send a telegram. In the evenings and on week ends the situation amounts to a black-out. I had a letter from a very prominent and public-spirited citizen of Prince Edward Island the other day, who had a distress call from a young man in Kingston on a week end. The young man needed money. When my correspondent went to the telegraph office in Charlottetown he found a note on the door, "Phone Moncton." But if one did phone Moncton with a request to send a money order, the reply would be to come in and send it. Instead he phoned Kingston and was asked, "Who are you?" This was a very serious emergency and he was not able to transmit the funds. So there is a communications black-out in the evenings and on week ends, as the hon. member mentioned. We are a generation behind in this particular field and yet we live in what Marshall McLuhan calls the "electric age".

On the same day that my constituent had the foregoing experience there was a ferry strike, so even had he wanted to go to Moncton he could not have arranged it. This brings me to a discussion of the very important transportation lifeline which connects Prince Edward Island to the mainland. Not too long ago ships were tied up in port for eight hours. People with families, people wanting to keep appointments or those who needed to travel discovered that the CNR service was not, in fact, functioning.