

National Transportation Policy

in the next few minutes have already been said in the House over the past few years, and it is only because the motion of the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Thomas) was put forward this afternoon that I believe some facts should be emphasized once again.

May I start by saying that I agree substantially with the motion put forward by the speaker for the Progressive Conservative party, the hon. member for Moncton. I say this because in the past week, along with other members of the Standing Committee on Transport of the House I have been visiting western Ontario. We attended hearings in the city of London, in Chatham, Stratford and the town of Walkerton. With respect to the speech made by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) earlier this afternoon, made in a very capable manner, in my opinion he defended a rather weak case. I must tell him that, without exception, not one of the briefs that were presented to us in each of the four places took the view that he took this afternoon.

He stated that the Canadian Transportation Commission, which is responsible to the government of Canada, has been doing a good job so far as passenger transport is concerned, particularly in western Ontario. I must remind you that the Parliament of Canada, through its national transportation policy, states:

—an economic, efficient and adequate transportation system making the best use of all available modes of transportation at the lowest total cost is essential to protect the interests of the users of transportation and to maintain the economic wellbeing and growth of Canada.

Having quoted this, may I ask the Minister of Transport the following question through you, Mr. Speaker: how can the transportation system be "economic, efficient and adequate" when in certain areas in the province of Ontario there is no transportation whatsoever, by rail, by bus or by air? The only form of transportation that is available to the people in those areas is the automobile. Of course, you and I know that not everyone in Canada drives an automobile. They may be senior citizens or they may have no wish to drive a car, or else they may not have the desire to drive into a large city like Toronto where it is very difficult for other than professional automobile drivers to get around these days. There are many municipalities in western Ontario which simply have no mode of transportation whatever.

I refer you to a front line story in the *Globe and Mail* of a week or so ago which referred to the situation in the town of Chesley, a beautiful town approximately 120 miles from the city of Toronto. It would be far faster for any resident of that area who does not have an automobile to travel on a horse than it would be to travel by bus or by train. There are simply no trains, and the bus service is so deficient in that area that one simply cannot get out of the town. I respectfully ask whether this is an adequate and efficient transportation system so far as the town of Chesley is concerned. The same is true of many towns and cities in that area. May I respectfully point out that in the great city of Galt, a city of 70,000 people, there is not one single passenger service going either in or out of the city, and this has been so for some months now.

This afternoon the Minister of Transport said the following in defence of the Transportation Commission: "Only about 6 per cent of passenger train mileage in

[Mr. Whicher.]

Canada has been discontinued" in the past few years. What he failed to say was that the hierarchy of the CNR and the CPR have applied for the discontinuance of the passenger service. It is difficult for me to believe that only 6 per cent of the passengers have been affected by the discontinuance of the service. While this may be true, nevertheless I tell you that as soon as the CNR apply for the discontinuance of 100 per cent of the passenger services they will get permission from the CTC if we, as Parliament are not prepared to do something about it.

• (1710)

The hon. Minister stressed that the CTC must be independent in order to do its job, and that there must be a minimum of interference from the government and Parliament. But, Mr. Speaker, where the CTC does not do a proper job we, as members of this House, have an obligation to interfere. We are not here to stick up for the policies of either the CPR or CNR. We here to stick up for the people in our constituencies. The fact is that in constituencies like my own, transportation facilities are not adequate and something must be done about them.

On many occasions it has been said in this chamber that the railways have an obligation to the people of Canada because many years ago the railways were granted certain rights, given large sums of money are huge tracts of land. As a matter of fact, at the hearings we held in Walkerton a few days ago, we were told that many of the municipalities in that area had granted substantial sums of money to the CNR, in return for which the railway promised service in perpetuity. On numerous occasions it has been pointed out that the CPR got a cash grant of \$25 million from the people of Canada and 25 million acres of land. In return, it agreed to provide service to the people of Canada in perpetuity. Mr. Speaker, what happens to a farmer in my riding if he gives a mortgage on his farm and cannot pay it? You and I know the brutal facts of life. He loses the farm.

I point out to you, Sir, to the CTC and to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) that the railways signed a deal to accept so much money and so much land, in return for which they would provide certain services. Those services are not now being provided. As Parliament, we have an obligation to the people of Canada to see that the railways stand by the bargains they made, and honour the signatures that their officials affixed to certain documents many years ago. It is not just small municipalities which are suggesting that trains be placed back on the tracks in order to provide passenger service. The province of Ontario submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on Transport only a week or two ago, in which one of the strongest recommendations was that passenger trains be put back on the tracks again. I heartily agree with that recommendation.

The other day I read in the financial section of the *Globe and Mail* that the President of the CPR had stated he was pleased to see that the people of Canada seemed to have gotten out of their heads the thought that railways necessarily had to provide passenger service. Mr. Speaker, not only do the railways have a moral obligation to provide passenger service, they also have a legal obligation to provide it. I am sure that if the president of the CPR or the president of the CNR signed a deal with some