

Supply—Transport

Canso area, thus releasing the men at North Sydney from employment a little more quickly?

May I also ask the minister what is going to be done with the C.N.R. ships, those that are presently operating out of North Sydney under charter by the C.N.R.? Are they going to be kept in service when these other new ships come into operation, or will their numbers be reduced? Can he tell us whether under C.B.R.T. seniority rights—and this is only quite proper—the crews from these vessels will receive priority if any positions become available when these new vessels come into service?

In one of the letters we have received it is stated, with respect to members of the I.L.A., that all the employees affected, "other than stevedores," have seniority rights which will help them get similar jobs with the company. In other words, it would appear that stevedores are at the bottom of the list so far as any new positions that open up are concerned. Mr. Grayston said in his letter that solutions to complex problems do not come easily. I think the man is correct because this is certainly a complex problem brought about by the action of this government.

This is the second heavy body blow dealt by this government. A year of two ago it closed down the Point Edward naval base which had a working force of 600 or 700, but now that working force is down to little more than 100 the same situation is going to occur in North Sydney. I would ask the minister to think seriously about this problem. Now that it is out in the open I tell him not to try to evade anything any more. His job, along with the C.N.R. and all the rest of us who are concerned, is to try to see what can be done to assist the men who will be affected.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chairman, in speaking in this debate, which relates to discussion of the estimates of the Department of Transport, there are several points I wish to bring to the attention of the minister and the committee. During the last week the C.P.R. has taken daily, and several times a day, criticism that I am sure it so rightly deserves. Not only has the government a responsibility in regard to public carriers, but the welfare of the Canadian people is definitely involved in this matter.

In my opinion it has become clearly evident that the C.P.R. is deliberately creating a situation whereby public opinion will force the government to take over this railroad company. The management of C.P.R. have

first carefully stripped the company of all its real estate assets, other than the railway right-of-way itself—its natural resources, its industrial development and Canadian Pacific Airlines. On the basis of this public resentment being generated across the country, unless this whole attitude is changed, and changed quickly, there will be no alternative but for the government to take over the railroad.

If we look back at the situation that developed during the past year, it is remarkable the way in which public opinion has changed towards this once great railroad company. This change of attitude has been caused not only by the demoralizing effect the company's actions has had on its employees but, particularly in the west, by the removal of the "Dominion" train. This has been a cause of much controversy. The change in attitude has also been due to the slowness with which the railroad has moved grain to the ports. It is a change of attitude which has spread right across the country.

Certainly it is a tragedy that a private enterprise company such as the C.P.R., with all its traditions of the past as one of the greatest projects ever initiated by private enterprise, should now, through the downgrading of its standards of service, through its elimination of certain passenger trains, through its closing of important station service relating to telegrams and the shipping of express, through its intentional slowdown in the movement of grain to the west coast, and through its unfair and inequitable passenger rate structure, deliberately invite public takeover.

There are just one or two remarks I would like to make in regard to several of these points. The first relates to the lowering of standards of service in the carriage of passengers, and even with regard to the handling of freight and express. I think all members of parliament who travel on the C.P.R. will understand the truth of what I say. Certainly I hear it from my own constituents that the C.P.R. seems to be deliberately letting its standards of service, which were once so high, become shoddy, inefficient and inadequate. Its cars are not being maintained properly. Even service in its dining cars is not what it used to be.

The whole standard of efficiency that once resulted in people using the C.P.R. rather than the C.N.R. has now been lowered, with the result people are travelling more on the