

Committee on Railways and Shipping

Therefore, I just recall again the words of Mr. Fairweather, and add that this parliament is faced through its ministry of transport and through the officials of this railway with a tremendous problem and it should receive as sympathetic and as close consideration as, and the best understanding that, this house can give it.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make just one brief comment on the economic position of the Canadian National Railways. I can make this quite brief by putting on the record this quotation:

The Canadian National, especially, has to maintain unprofitable branch line services in the public interest. It has to keep on increasing the quality of passenger services in response to public demands. Canada is well served by this transportation system and, all things considered, Canadians should not grudge the \$2-a-head contribution indicated by the current financial statement.

That, Mr. Speaker, comes from a publication not noted for its sympathy with the Liberal party or the government now in power. It was found in the *Toronto Telegram* on March 23 of this year.

Another comment I should like to make with regard to the Canadian National Railways is that I hope the committee will give serious consideration to the employment situation on the railway. As the minister knows, this is something that has concerned a number of us for many months. We are deeply disturbed over the extent of the lay-offs and we hope that something can be done to put a stop to these lay-offs and start re-employing some of those who have lost their jobs.

I also hope that the committee will deal more effectively than it has in the past with the plight of retired Canadian National Railways employees, particularly those whose pensions are in the lower brackets. I invite the committee to study the figures which can be found on pages 1762 and 1763 of *Hansard* for Monday, March 7, in answer to certain questions of mine, which indicate the large number of retired C.N.R. employees who are on pensions of very low amounts.

I am not at all satisfied with the answer which the minister continues to make. It is the same answer that the previous minister made to those who asked that something be done about this matter. The answer seems to be that others are in the same tough spot due to contractual obligations so it is too bad for the C.N.R. employees and nothing can be done about them.

I do not accept that answer as valid nor do I accept it as final, that nothing can be

done for these people. I hope that consideration will be given to their plight by the committee which is to be set up when this motion is passed.

As hon. members know, if it were not for something else which I wish to discuss, I would speak at greater length on the two matters I have just touched upon in passing; that is, the unemployment situation and the position of the retired employees of the C.N.R. I shall come back to these matters on another occasion.

The other matter to which I wish to address myself at this time is one which comes within the terms of this motion in that the motion refers to the committee the accounts, estimates and affairs of Trans-Canada Air Lines. In the report of Trans-Canada Air Lines for 1954 which was laid on the table of the house on March 14 there are references to two crashes which took place in 1954. One of my colleagues, the hon. member for Moose Jaw-Lake Centre (Mr. Thatcher), may speak later in this debate about the crash which took place at Moose Jaw. I wish to say something about the crash which took place near Brampton, Ontario, on December 17, 1954. That was the crash involving a Super-Constellation which had returned that day from a flight to Tampa, Florida. As hon. members will recall, there was—

Mr. Speaker: I do not wish to limit the latitude which hon. members may wish to take on this motion but I am asking myself whether it is in order at this moment to discuss whatever one might want to put forward before the committee after it is set up. In some cases when these motions come up there is no debate with respect to the subject matter to which it refers and in some cases there is debate. We had an example of that not long ago when the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation committee was created, but I assume it was by general agreement that a debate on C.B.C. policies took place at that time. Unless there is a similar agreement on this occasion when an hon. member makes passing reference to the subject matter I can see no objection to it, but if anyone wishes to deal at great length with a certain subject which he would like to see debated before the committee, I submit he ought to wait until the committee is set up and submit it there.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, on that point Your Honour knows standing order 38 does provide that a motion to set up a committee is debatable. It is also in order under standing order 38 to debate the reference to a committee of any report or return that has