

● (1540)

We must say to ourselves that if a Crown corporation is in competition with private enterprise and cannot do as well, then we had better look very hard at the directors, the system and the organization of that Crown corporation—indeed, at the validity of Crown corporations in the first place. When this bill comes before committee, the directors of this corporation, if they have not already been questioned by members of the committee, had better look after themselves. They will have to explain—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired. He could continue with unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Blenkarn: I have only one or two remarks, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that since this Crown corporation was set up for the purpose of providing service to the public, we as a government should determine the public service quotient in it. If we had a private corporation doing that work, the same thing would apply. We should receive the public service that we require from the corporation. We should then say to the corporation officials: "Do not tell us about the public service problem. We have paid you well for that. It should have brought you profit. You must perform as does any other business, and if you cannot perform that well, then there is something wrong with your management".

Unless we start looking at these corporations very seriously, we will wind up with bills such as this every year. We have the same problem with the CBC. We are told we need that corporation for national communications. It costs us about \$100 million a year. We do need that corporation for national communication in part, but let us buy the national communications service from the corporation.

The same applies to transportation. Let us buy the transportation service from the corporation at such rates as we need to pay in order to tie the country together. Having done that, these corporations must stand on their own feet, and so must their management. If they cannot do so, then there is mismanagement somewhere. These people are not working for the public service. They are working for Crown corporations and they are paid as they would be on the ordinary commercial market. These corporations are supposed to pay taxes and do something for the economy of the country. So I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, and to members of the House, that the management of Air Canada and of CNR leaves much to be desired and there is much to be explained.

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I will probably speak for a relatively short time this afternoon, but there are one or two matters which I should like to bring before the House. Much has been said about the CNR and Air Canada, and about the fact that they do not operate as well as private enterprise. I find it rather strange that this point should be made so strongly. Let us remember that the CNR came into business because a number of private railroad companies were going bankrupt. Initially, the CNR was a rescue operation.

Mr. Blenkarn: That was 60 years ago.

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

Mr. Gleave: I thought everyone knew that the CNR was a rescue operation. I cannot even say which particular government performed that rescue operation, whether it was a Conservative, a Liberal or a union government, but whatever government it was I suspect that it had no alternative. I do not see why we quibble about that matter. So far as the CPR is concerned also, I suppose, the people to my right would say that that company is a great example of private enterprise operating well. Initially, that company also was a great example of a group of skillful financiers and promoters being able to take the public of Canada into camp and come out very well as a result of their manipulations. Let us face it.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Shysters.

Mr. Gleave: I do not see the point of wailing about this particular aspect. If the members here want to talk about the type of service that is given by the public corporation, then I think they are quite justified in examining this aspect, and I myself would like to examine it in particular. I regret very much that the matter of CNR financing did not come before a committee of the House before we recessed and before the rail strike occurred. There are railroad employees in my constituency who wanted to put across their points of view with regard to pensions before that committee. They wrote to ask if they could do that. They sought a hearing but were unable to get it. This failure lies at the door of the government across the way. For some reason or other, apparently they did not wish to see CNR financing before the committee. This contributed to some of the unrest that occurred among workers on the railroad because they felt, I think rightly so, that they were being unfairly treated.

The hon. member who spoke before me was very unhappy with the fact that the CNR is in the hotel business, they have been in the hotel business for a long while. I might say, on the opposite side of the fence, that I am very unhappy at the fact they got out of the hotel business in Saskatoon.

Mr. Whicher: They did not make it pay.

Mr. Gleave: As a matter of fact, it did pay the year they sold it. I want to tell the hon. member something else, namely, that the CNR had spent a lot of money on that hotel. They had remodelled the main floor of a very attractive building and they had done a good job. They put in a swimming pool and brought this hotel up to the top standard.

Mr. Whicher: They got the money from us last year.

Mr. Gleave: That is absolutely right. They got the money from the people. And then what did they do? They sold it to good old private enterprise at a figure that they will not disclose. The CNR and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) will not tell the people of Canada the price for which they sold that hotel. I wrote the minister a letter on August 8 asking him for the price at which the hotel was sold, but he has not yet replied. I received a reply from the minister which is dated October 18 and came into my hands today. It took the minister two months to inform me that he would not reveal to a member of the House of Commons the price at which the CNR, a Crown corpora-