

*Canadian National Railways Act*

to say that the Minister of Transport generally sets an example to the hon. gentlemen opposite that would improve the decorum of the house if they followed it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I do not know whether it is because of influences external to the house, but there seems to be a general desire for all members to talk at once this morning. We shall not make any progress on that basis. I ask for their co-operation in restraining their comments until they get the floor.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I rose yesterday, Mr. Speaker to take issue with me the only solid argument, if you can call it that, which has been made in favour of this bill. I refer to the argument made by the hon. member for Vancouver South. The hon. gentleman was in his place earlier. We know there are good reasons why the hon. gentleman may not be in the house, and I do not want to allude to them. I certainly do not want to say anything that would be in any way a reflection on that hon. gentleman, particularly in the circumstances in which he finds himself at the present time and about which we all feel great sympathy.

However, I am obliged to take issue with his argument, and it is only with his argument that I am seeking to take issue. He made an argument and I should like to read it, because yesterday he said that I had been unfair to him. I do not wish to be unfair to the hon. gentleman in any circumstance, and I am deeply anxious not to be unfair to him in the present circumstance. I should therefore like to read what he said. As will be found at page 4906 of *Hansard* he said:

Mr. Speaker, before I answer some of the statements made by the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) I should like to say this to the hon. member for Levis (Mr. Bourget) who stated so emphatically that he tried to find one argument for increasing the number of directors but could not find one valid one. If he would compare the operating statements of the C.P.R. and the C.N.R. over the past few years, he might find a few arguments. He might find an argument in the fact that the C.N.R. deficits over 1960 and 1959 were \$110 million which were paid for by the taxpayers whereas in the same two years the C.P.R. contributed \$53 million in the form of corporation tax payments. If you have a business operation and are not too successful and if you have very successful competitors, the wise businessman takes a look at the practice of his competitors and is not afraid to copy any of the practices which he feels may be of advantage to him.

In reply to that observation, as found at page 4908 of *Hansard* I said this:

The hon. member has advanced one reason why we should be in favour of this bill, and I think that reason should be given somewhat more emphasis than he placed upon it. He said we should appoint five more directors to the board of the C.N.R. in order to end the deficit.

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

Perhaps that is a somewhat exaggerated way of putting what the hon. gentleman said. However, if we just leave the two statements side by side I think most people would come to the conclusion that what the hon. gentleman was saying was that if we increased the number of directors of the C.N.R. there would be a greater prospect that the C.N.R. would not have a deficit, and that it would be in a position similar to that of the C.P.R. If his argument did not mean that I do not think it meant anything; and I think it was intended to mean something. I just wanted to make it very, very clear that I had grounds for what I said; that I was not being unfair to the hon. gentleman in that matter.

The hon. gentleman also took some exception to another statement I made. I should like to clear that up also because again, as I say, I do not want to be unfair to the hon. gentleman. He took some exception to my drawing this conclusion from his observations in the committee stage when I said yesterday:

So that even though the high minded member from Vancouver South said British Columbia does not need a director he finds his colleagues from Alberta rising at once to say that if there are to be any more directors we should have one from Alberta.

I did not mean to imply—and if I did the hon. gentleman any injustice I want to repair it at once—that the hon. gentleman said specifically that there should be no director from British Columbia. He did not say that. If I gave the impression in my words that he did say it specifically, I apologize. But the general language he did use was, "Take the best men wherever you can find them. Do not pay any attention to these considerations of geography other than broadly regional considerations".

That, of course, is the position the previous government took. That is the position that prevails at the present time with seven directors. When the hon. member for Vancouver South made his argument he was seeking to refute an argument that was made by the hon. member for Laurier, an argument that I do not think can be successfully refuted; the argument that if we have 12 directors the appointments will have to be not on a broadly regional basis but in fact, owing to all the practices which there have always been, no matter who was in office in this country, there will have to be a representative from every province or there will be a great deal of complaint from any province that is excluded.

To illustrate my point yesterday—and I repeat this because the argument does not seem to have been appreciated and perhaps repetition in that case is excusable to make the argument abundantly clear—I recalled that hon. gentlemen in 1957 campaigned against us in one of the provinces of this