

*Canadian National Railways and Air Canada*

dependency on the gasoline operated motor that has become basic to our way of life in the last two generations.

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If the government really is leading, then surely it would want to take the lead in consulting provincial and local authorities across the country so that, before it is too late, we can have a comprehensive and socially constructive public transit program based upon the utilization of our railroad lines. If we had a government that put people first, and if that were the attitude of the CNR, then that would be exactly what we would do. We would have in every major urban centre the kind of development that would use these railroad lines and railroad rights-of-way so that rapid commuter public transit services would be employed.

I read recently about the three priorities of the CNR mentioned in a discussion of transport opportunities in the metro Toronto area. The first of these priorities relates to industrial customers—I take this to mean freight—and inter-city passengers going from one region to another. Their next priority is the GO line, that is the commuter service offered by the government of Ontario, and the third is to metropolitan Toronto. Is that what this government wants to say to metro Toronto: you are in first place? Is that what they want to say to the commuters of that vast area comprising within it now in excess of two million people: you are in third place? Are they saying: if there is any consideration to be given when every other matter has been looked after, then we will think of you? Surely, if we are putting people first, if we really care about developing a way of life that can be meaningful and satisfying to the kind of people that keep this country going, then the railway should say to those people: you are in first place and we want to give a high priority to your transit needs.

At the very heart of this problem we need a change of thinking. What we need is not so much to give priorities to various levels of government but to give priority to the people who are represented by those governments, to seek to establish a program that will involve the authority and jurisdiction of all three levels, federal, provincial and metro, all of them seeking in co-operation with one another to represent the interests of their common constituents. There are not three kinds of people that are represented by members of parliament, members of legislative assemblies and municipal councillors—they are the same people. We should get over this notion of thinking that governments have rights and claims of their own, and to recognize that the only excuse any of us have for being in office is to fulfill the aspirations and satisfy the needs of the people whom we commonly represent.

I would hope, therefore, that out of this debate there will come a new attitude to public transit in Canada, a new concern to utilize the CNR and other railroad facilities in the interest of the common people of this country. I think that we should recognize that railroads give us a new opportunity. For a long time it seemed as though the railroads were going to join certain other relics of the past in the antique museums of the country. For a time it seemed as though the railroads were going to be part of the memory of the Canadian people replaced by the jet aircraft and by the high speed automobile as the means by

which people would find transportation in an age of rapid movement. But under the combined threat of the energy crisis, and of the pollution crisis, it is now becoming apparent that we had better take another look at our railroads, that railroads offer us a chance to meet the needs of people in a way that does not pollute and does not threaten the energy resources of the country and in a way that can satisfy the needs and hopes of our people.

Let me give another illustration and refer to the experience of the hundreds of thousands of summer residents in the so-called cottage country of southern Ontario. Every weekend the population of the Muskoka and Georgian Bay regions of Ontario are expanded by hundreds of thousands of city dwellers who make their way northward for a few days of surcease from the pressures and pollution of urban life. For years and years the government of the province has been making bigger highways that can transport these multitudes northward on weekends. I suppose that if we went on travelling by car as the population grows we would expect Ontario to construct even more highways. But surely we need to recognize, for the two reasons which I have cited, namely, the threatening shortage of energy and the threatening danger of pollution, that we have a need to move in a contrary direction, that instead of simply building more and more six and eight lane highways to become massive parking lots for cars stalled in traffic jams at the beginning and at the end of each weekend, we will begin to see that we could use our railroad lines as a way of transporting the city dwellers to the cottage country during the vacation season.

In times past railroads were the main method of transportation. If you went to a town such as Gravenhurst and visited the local museum there, you could see pictures of the times when railroad trains came right on the docks. People holidaying were brought from southern Ontario to Gravenhurst and given the opportunity of arriving at the dock, of moving from the train to a steamship which took them to the various points on the lake from which they could get to their own family cottage. That was the style of people two or three generations ago and it served the people who had summer homes in that region. Surely, we could do something as good as that today. Surely, we can think in terms of having a railroad service that would provide the ordinary city dweller with an opportunity to commute each weekend without using his car, and without requiring further highway construction in that district.

I think that one of the things upon which we should all agree is the opportunity that we would have to serve our people if the CNR were, under the direction and influence of the federal government, to initiate that kind of service. I think of the great need that there is for this, not only because of the danger of pollution and of energy shortages but also because of the great danger posed by increasing auto traffic on the highways of our various provinces. One of the things that should concern us is the mounting death toll because of increased auto traffic. Between 5,000 and 6,000 Canadians meet their death in traffic accidents every year. If we were losing that many in military action, if last year we had lost even a tenth of that number in military action or peacekeeping ventures, there would be an outcry on both sides of the House. Somehow we seem to be gripped by a curious and heartless apathy when it comes to the death toll which occurs as a result of traffic acci-