

Railway Act

report from this royal commission. This is what is going on. This is the meaning of cost effectiveness in human terms in a province that is already on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. They want the province squeezed. Its railway services have to be squeezed, reduced and cut back year by year in order to save a few dollars.

We know that the railway service is not making money. But what has to be done in Newfoundland is for the minister to spend \$300 million or a half a billion dollars to put the rails back into shape again and give the province a decent roadbed and to give us a standard gauge railway. Or, I suppose they could drag along as they are doing now, and if they do that they will be faced with spending some money on the Trans-Canada Highway.

In 1965 the Liberal deal was made between the Smallwood government and the Pearson government. If the Smallwood government did not raise a fuss at the abandonment of the railway passenger lines, 90 per cent of the construction of the Trans-Canada Highway would be paid for by the Pearson government. The Trans-Canada Highway was finished. It is a narrow road. However, in the last 17 years it has completely deteriorated because the freight has now left the railway. CN, being so badly operated and supported in resources, are trying to skimp every corner. The movement of freight has left the CN and is now being hauled by trucks. These huge heavy transport trucks are travelling over our narrow two-lane Trans-Canada Highway, which is subject to some of the most difficult weather conditions in the world.

The Newfoundland climate experiences freezing alternated with mild spells all during the winter and spring with the result that these heavy transport trucks have wrecked the highway. Yet when the government of Newfoundland approaches the Government of Canada together with representatives of the other Atlantic provinces, and asks them to share 90 per cent of the cost of reinvigorating, redoing, revitalizing and repaving the road which is now a danger and a menace, because of this federally induced action the minister says no. "Old cost effective Lang" says "no"—50 per cent, and he will not budge on the 50 per cent.

I think, as the election approaches, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) will become less and less cost effective and more and more, hopefully for him, politically effective. There will be a change in policy. But I ask the minister to change it now when he speaks later in this debate again, if he speaks again—all these things—the minister's treatment of the railway, his cost effectiveness respecting the railway, the squeeze on the CN, his refusal to meet their deficits, and so on.

In 1949 the federal government took over the Newfoundland railway. Now it is forcing CN to move all freight on a little highway which is dissolving into the mire. Drive on that highway, Mr. Speaker; it is worth your life! And the minister is not prepared to give anything more than 50 per cent. He knows that the provincial government of Newfoundland cannot raise the money to meet its 50 per cent share of the cost, which would be something like \$100 million over ten years. The minister has to change his policy there, and to bend.

We have other problems. The CN bus service was to replace our rail passenger service. It was supervised by the Newfoundland Public Utilities Commission which did not allow exorbitant rate increases. In July of 1976 the Minister of Transport, the "bus snatcher" as we call him in Newfoundland, had an order in council passed and snatched the buses from under the jurisdiction of the public utilities commission and placed them under the jurisdiction of this laughable joke, this Canadian Transport Commission. What has happened since is just what I have said, Mr. Speaker. It is an insidious plan to give rate increases.

First of all they had a rate increase of 8 per cent and they approved it without blinking an eye several months after they gained jurisdiction over the rates. Now six months later CN has asked for another 15 per cent increase; I did not have time to check this but I think that 15 per cent has also been approved. There has been a 23 per cent increase in total since the bus service went under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Transport Commission—all without consultation with the province. This is co-operative federalism? This is the Liberal view on how to treat the provinces! Does anyone wonder why the province of Quebec wants to separate? Does anyone wonder why any provincial government in Canada today, with one or two exceptions, is angry and frustrated and disturbed at the federal government? They are no longer satisfied with this system. There is one thing that will change that, Mr. Speaker, that is a change of government, and that is coming.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Is the Minister of Transport rising on a point of order?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. The hon. member has referred to a lack of consultation in connection with the problem relating to the buses in Newfoundland. I expected that he would have known there was a consultation. At that time the buses were not operating because of the actions taken by the Newfoundland government. Indeed, there were members of his own party from Newfoundland who joined in asking me to act to make sure those buses would operate again. We transferred them to another jurisdiction in order to get them operating again. I hope the hon. member will recognize that fact and that consultation.

● (1632)

Mr. Crosbie: I do not recognize that fact. I do not have the time now to go into the details to ram that right down the minister's gullet. Here is the minister's idea of co-operation. This is what the four Atlantic premiers said. I quote:

Federal-provincial consultation does not occur when one party merely informs the other of its position or intended action.

That is the minister's view of consultation, "There you are, boys, this is what I am doing." That is his idea of consultation. It does not take place.

I go on with the quote:

It does not take place when the basic information or rationale underlining one party's position is partially or completely withheld from the other party. It does not occur when the dialogue starts too late to influence positions or events.