

Business of the House

agricultural, the other is non-improvable permanent pasture. But the site they finally chose was all on class one and two soil. This is a federal responsibility. The amount of land that was used up amounted to 1,444 acres, and there is no one who knows anything about agriculture who can claim that that is an insignificant amount of soil.

I think that the federal government certainly has an obligation to pursue programs which encourage building and so on, but I am curious what specific federal thrusts there are in this development.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The hon. member sounds very knowledgeable about the subject. I find I can always learn something here, Madam Chairman, even as ten o'clock approaches. I would think that the federal Department of Public Works, the Department of Transport and the Department of Urban Affairs, in so far as land banking is concerned, should take what the hon. member has said as a prime consideration, namely, the preservation where possible, as a priority, of our prime rural soil for agricultural purposes. So without pretending in any way that I can fully appreciate the facts that he has brought before the committee, let me say that he has a point.

Mr. Malone: I want to take the opportunity to express my thanks to the minister for taking this point into consideration. I want simply to add the following comment. Obviously the federal and provincial governments would not allow any kind of development over any other resource that is so important to us. For instance, we would not build cities over iron, over tar sands or over nickel mines. But at a time when the emphasis is on the production of food to feed the hungry of the world, and when we think of the fact that there are only two sources of food, soil and water, we must take account of the statistics before us and pay far greater attention to the use of good soil for agricultural purposes. I appreciate the response of the minister that that matter will be considered.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Shall Clause 7 stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

● (2200)

Mr. Stevens: I wish to speak on clause 7 as amended just as long as it is not stood. I do not wish it to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: It being ten o'clock, it is my duty to rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again at the next sitting of the House.

Progress reported.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, I rise on what I call a point of order simply because there have been many discussions tonight as to what we might be doing tomorrow. Even though some of us may know, could it be announced so that everyone will know?

[Mr. Malone.]

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I know how much the hon. member and his party enjoy this bill, so I think we will continue with Bill C-49 tomorrow.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS—SALE OF PART OF HOTEL SYSTEM

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, yesterday I raised with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) the matter concerning the attempted sale of a major portion of the ownership of Canadian National hotels to a new company in which the Hilton hotel chain and the Trizec Corporation are involved. The minister in his final answer said:

There is no doubt in my mind that CN cannot make a deal with the hotels without the approbation of the Government of Canada.

I had earlier asked the minister whether the government had been informed of this, whether it had been asked for its opinion, whether it had given any advice or guidance or instruction to Canadian National or Air Canada, to which he failed to respond. I find it incredible that CN and Air Canada, which are both publicly owned corporations, would even consider dealing away, let alone attempt to deal away, a large portion of the properties which it is their responsibility to operate on behalf of the owners, the people of Canada. It is bad enough that these Crown corporations would attempt to turn publicly owned property over to private corporations, but surely it is even worse when those private corporations are foreign owned.

This proposed deal is symptomatic of the sickness which pervades our whole transportation system. Our transportation companies, even the Crown corporations in transportation, remain insensitive to our legitimate needs and our proper national goals. The fact that the government would let the CNR even take part in discussions to turn over publicly owned property to foreign corporations shows again its supine loyalty to the foreign owners of much of Canada's economy.

If the Canadian National Railways need better management of its hotels, it should hire whatever expertise is required and not do it by depleting publicly owned Canadian assets. If Air Canada needs assured hotel accommodation in other countries, there are other and much better methods of acquiring it than through the deal they have proposed.

I want to ask the parliamentary secretary if he or his minister has been party to, or had prior knowledge of, a Crown corporation attempting to sell off a major share of the ownership of publicly owned property to form private corporations for their own internal requirements without the knowledge of, or having consultation with, the govern-