

Railways and Shipping Committee

Minister of Transport and his colleagues are going to continue with this policy and are going to persist in taking attitudes now which are at variance with those they took when they were on this side of the house; if they are going to adopt a policy of reversion on everything they had to say and admit how insincere they were—I cannot use the word “dishonest”—or to admit that they did not mean precisely what they were saying when they sat in opposition, then they are doing relatively little except lowering the stature of government in the eyes of the people of Canada and placing in a little bit lower position the opinions that people have of members of the House of Commons or of cabinet ministers.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, may I interject here, inasmuch as the hon. member has inferred—

Mr. Speaker: Is the minister rising on a point of order?

Mr. Hees: It is a question of privilege. The hon. member has inferred that while the Conservative party was in opposition we were—

Mr. Pickersgill: Surely, Mr. Speaker, this is no question of privilege.

Mr. Hees: Yes, Mr. Speaker; it is a question of privilege. The hon. member has inferred that we were not sincere in what we said. We meant the things we said when we were in opposition.

Mr. Pickersgill: Order.

Mr. Hees: We meant what we said when we were in opposition. If two or three years later, because of changing events, we have changed our opinion to some extent, that does not mean that we were not sincere at the time.

Mr. Speaker: I take it that the minister was complaining of the use of the word “insincere” as a matter of privilege.

Mr. Hees: Yes; and the word “dishonest”.

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. member did not say “dishonest”.

Mr. Speaker: The minister will recall that while the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) hinted that he would like to use that word, he deliberately refrained from doing so.

Mr. Pickersgill: He said he would not use it.

An hon. Member: He did use it.

Mr. Howard: This attitude is becoming all too prevalent. Certainly, as the Minister of Transport just said, it is perfectly all right to take a second look; it is perfectly legitimate to change your opinion on some subject

matters. It might be all right for the Minister of Transport personally, in this particular case, to say that there was some justification for changing his mind. The point I am getting at is that that is the general attitude of the government itself. This is just another phase of it.

Mr. Speaker: I should like to remind the hon. member that we are not debating the general attitude of the government. We are debating a motion to establish a committee dealing with transportation.

Mr. Howard: Yes, I quite appreciate that fact, Mr. Speaker. I only expanded on that approach because of the question of privilege raised by the minister and said that he is part and parcel of this change of attitude. I think that is something that has to do with the establishment of this committee in view of the discussion entered upon by the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) which was rather broad and rather general, and which dealt with a number of these subject matters. I mentioned the matter in that light. I did not wish to expand on it, except in so far as it was occasioned by the interjection of the Minister of Transport. However, I will cease dealing with that phase of the matter and merely say that there are one or two most important questions which must be considered by this committee and one or two most important attitudes of the Canadian National Railways which must be reviewed closely. I hope the Minister of Transport has not changed his mind on this particular phase of it or changed his opinion from that which he had when he sat over here in the opposition. I am referring to the apparently ruthless or callous disregard of the employees of the Canadian National Railways when it comes to lay-offs.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lennard: The same old chestnut.

Mr. Howard: Mr. Speaker, some hon. members are making interjections. I do not mind interjections but I wish they would make them loudly enough so that I can hear them or make them in a formal way.

Mr. Lennard: The same old chestnut.

Mr. Howard: This attitude of the Canadian National Railways must be looked at closely and people must not just be turned out on the streets merely because that procedure appears to be the policy or the thing to do at that particular moment. In addition to that—and this is something closer to home—the Canadian National have a steamboat on the Pacific coast.

An hon. Member: Not a steamboat.