

*Canadian National Railways*

That was a very important statement at the 34th annual meeting of the Air Transport Association. In the 34th report, the chairman of the association also said:

I would be remiss if I did not record the disappointment and frustration of this industry resulting from the confusion existing regarding government policy. Not only has there been no implementation of previously enunciated policy governing the mainline and regional carriers, but no extension of policy governing other segments of the industry has been developed. Virtually all Canadian air carriers are suffering under a tremendous handicap in the development of plans, acquisition of new aircraft, and the continued operation of their companies on a profitable basis as action is delayed in providing effective air policy.

One would assume that much progress had taken place since then. However, the Minister of Transport seems to be very capable with words but not so capable with actions. I have before me the 36th annual report of the Air Transport Association of Canada for the year ending September 30, 1970, and on page 5 I read:

It seems probable that the ultimate step that must be taken is an appropriate amendment to the Aeronautics Act. In a recent letter to the Minister we have again asked for confirmation that the Canadian Transport Commission is responsible for enforcement of the Aeronautics Act and will take the necessary steps to enforce it. We are now awaiting the Minister's reply.

This matter, Mr. Speaker, has been under discussion for three years. Last year I quoted from the 1968 annual report of the Air Transport Association. Now, I have quoted from the 1970 report. I hope I will not be able to read something similar from the 1971 report. If an amendment to the Aeronautics Act is required, I hope that the minister will act.

Whenever one asks the Minister of Transport a question in this House one gets a great deal of verbiage in reply. That is not good enough. When one reads into the record statements which indicate a complete distrust of the Department of Transport by the Air Transport Association extending over three years, and sees that no action has been taken, one becomes concerned. "We will judge your verbiage by your action" is what one should say to the Minister of Transport, and if he were in the House I would gladly say it to him.

There is another matter I have not dealt with in this debate. Generally, the financial statements and annual reports of Air Canada and the CNR are brought before the Standing Committee on Transport. Last year there was a great deal of confusion in the operation of Air Canada and the jobs of a number of people were in jeopardy. We were anxious to get representatives of Air Canada before the transportation committee but for some reason or other we were not able to do that. Before this bill passes, I hope we can get an undertaking from the minister that they will be asked to appear before the committee this year and that last year's Air Canada report will get a high priority.

• (12:50 p.m.)

We see Air Canada getting into difficulty and showing deficits because of the decrease in their percentage of the traffic in both passengers and freight to and from Canada. There also seems to be a lack of clear understanding of the guidelines laid down with regard to the

[Mr. Horner.]

purchase of planes. I should like to see Canada take a leading position in the world by saying that we really do not need supersonic jets for passenger traffic. Personally, I do not think they will be needed for perhaps another 20 years. The jumbo jets are fine and will probably be around for a long time before we can fill them to more than 60 per cent of their passenger capacity on both international and long haul domestic flights.

These are some of the questions that face us. Do we believe that the benefits these supersonic jets will bring to the airlines will be more than offset by the harm they do in the area of pollution. There is also the difficult question of the cost they will add to the provision of airport facilities, et cetera. Just to move a 747 around an airport by tractor into a loading position costs \$150,000. These tractors just pull the aircraft around and several are needed in each airport. One has to be available whenever a 747 is going to land. You can imagine how the costs build up with the various changes of planes from the stretched DC-8 or Lockheed 710 to the 747, so what will happen with the supersonic jet? The airports will necessarily be a long way from communities and thus increase the distance that passengers must travel to get to the airport. The Chairman of the Canadian Transport Commission has stated that it is not the difficulty of moving people in the air but the difficulty of moving people on the ground to and from airports that is causing the biggest bottleneck in the movement of passengers from one city to another.

Another question that has been bothering me for some time, Mr. Speaker, is the transportation committee's recommendation with regard to CNR pensions. We brought in a unanimous report which recommended certain changes in the Canadian National pension plan. These changes would have benefited many people receiving pensions today as well as others who will be retiring in the near future. Over 32,000 people in Canada today are receiving CNR pensions in one form or another. There has been a huge rise in the cost of living over the past five or six years but no comparable increase in CNR pensions. The committee unanimously agreed that an increase was necessary, particularly for those people on the \$25 a month pension of earlier times. The number of people on that particular pension is very small and they are in dire need of an increase. However, Mr. Speaker, we have not heard a word from the minister on the committee's study. Is the government going to recommend to the CNR that it take action? Here we have the CNR asking for financial assistance for the construction of branch lines and so on, but there is no mention of action with regard to the Canadian National pension plan which was studied so exhaustively by the committee.

These are some of the questions that have been in my mind for a number of months with regard to our Department of Transport. It is regrettable that this debate should take place with only one minister in the House. The Minister of Transport is not here nor is his Parliamentary Secretary.

**Some hon. Members: Shame.**