

Canadian National Railways

Mr. Chairman, since Air Canada is part of the Canadian National Railways or affiliated to that company and since it will also benefit from this money—which I am quite happy about—I should like the minister to consider the possibility of Air Canada also serving our region. Up until now, our part of the country has been served by private companies, Quebec Air or Nordair, but in view of all the taxes we pay to the federal government, Air Canada should consider the possibility of running a service between, for example, Montreal and Quebec, Roberval, Bagotville and Seven Islands.

We are also entitled to benefit from the services provided by state owned companies. Private companies provide the best service they can but, since they do not have the advantages of the crown corporations, they naturally cannot serve our part of the country the way Air Canada could.

If we discontinue the railway service, we will have to get another means of transportation. In my opinion, transport by air would be much more efficient. We have in Roberval an airport which has been abandoned for more than two years and which is now used only by a few private planes; when this measure is introduced, that will be the ideal time to consider the possibility of investing a few millions in our region, in air services.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to draw the minister's attention on that point before giving the last touch to the measure, in order to try to give the people of Lac-Saint-Jean and Saguenay a better service, first through the C.N.R. then, through Air Canada, as requested by the whole people of the region.

[*English*]

Mr. Peddle: May I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that we call it one o'clock?

The Deputy Chairman: With the unanimous consent of the committee is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chairman: It being 1 p.m. I do now leave the chair until 2.30 p.m.

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador.

[Mr. Gauthier.]

Mr. Peddle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you also for finally getting the correct name of my constituency. My first comment is that I wish very much that the measure before the committee this afternoon, the financing of the C.N.R., could be one that required unanimous consent in order to be passed by the committee because I assure you if such were the case there would not be unanimous consent. Further, I should like to say to all members on both sides of the house that if they had any idea of the real meaning of the concept of confederation, passage of this resolution would be denied by both sides of the house. Of course I am referring to the discontinuance of rail passenger service in the province of Newfoundland.

I think there is no better way for me to commence my remarks than to refer to the very first item in the terms of union between Newfoundland and Canada. Item 1 says that on, from, and after the coming into force of these terms, hereinafter referred to as the date of the union, Newfoundland shall form part of Canada and shall be a province thereof to be called and known as the province of Newfoundland. In the decision of the so-called rail transport committee to approve of the discontinuance of passenger service I maintain there is a direct violation of the terms of union. The province of Newfoundland is being set up as the single province in Canada that does not need a rail passenger service.

As a result of a question asked of the Minister of Transport in this house by one of my colleagues the Minister of Transport said, mind you, that he regrets the inconvenience to Newfoundlanders because of the planned cancellation of the C.N.R.'s rail passenger service. One would not know but that he had rubbed against you coming off the elevator and had said, "Very sorry about that, buddy". He mentioned that some other small branch lines are being discontinued. But to the people of Newfoundland he says, "We are sorry to cause you inconvenience". He forgets that the province of Newfoundland has had this service for some 70, 80 or 90 years, long before confederation.

I should like to refer to another of the terms of union. It probably is not explicit enough. One could find loopholes in it. Naturally the C.N.R. is noted for finding loopholes. They are the most professional loophole finders in the country. Item 31 says that at the time of union or as soon as possible thereafter Canada shall take over the following services and will, from the date of union,