

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

The question with which we really have to deal, and what is really the essence of all the speeches that we have heard on this bill, is that there are not simply problems with transportation in Canada—there are new challenges to meet. The long and the short of it is that as an operating railroad the CNR has not met those challenges. In a day when our cities are becoming overfilled with people, when there is a requirement to build new towns in my part of Ontario, indeed in all metropolitan areas of Canada, when we are putting more and more people into smaller and smaller areas, we are not developing in this country a transportation capability that will make a viable new towns concept, as proposed by the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford), really workable.

If we choose to slow the increase in the rate of population in our urban areas, there will be no foundation for this very worth-while program. The key to the success of that program will not merely be the provision of land, sewers and water, but the assurance to the people who will make a commitment to new areas which we are trying to establish, and which we hope will be established in this country some day, that they will have a transportation system that is speedy, efficient and inexpensive to operate.

There is no provision in this bill to give anybody any encouragement that the railroad companies, the CNR in particular, are being armed to meet this new challenge. We need only consider what has happened to the rail service in this country over the past few years, regardless of the admitted inability of the Minister of Transport. The railroads in this country have operated in such a way that they are attempting perhaps to do indirectly what they might better have done directly, namely, to drive passengers away from the railroads and to other modes of transportation.

It seems to me that while we must admit that the railroads, and perhaps Air Canada as well, need funding, there is no direction given either in the bill or in any government policy to assure the people of Canada that the transportation system of this country will be able to meet the challenges—a favoured word of hon. members opposite—of the seventies. Each of these challenges is being short-changed in terms of government policy.

I am about to sit down, Mr. Speaker, but I just wanted to express my personal sympathy, as well as the sympathy of all members on this side of the House, regarding the burdens that the Minister of Finance must carry. I hope he will take a very active part in the review of the transportation policy of this country, a policy that a senior minister of the government has admitted is chaotic, to be charitable, and is in a mess, to be honest.

[Translation]

Mr. Godin: Mr. Speaker, may I call it ten o'clock?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I am under the impression that another hon. member might speak. We could end this debate tonight, with the consent of the House. It would not be long.

Mr. Godin: Mr. Speaker, I will have a few words to say tomorrow. I know that one of my colleagues also wants to

[Mr. Baker.]

speak on certain problems peculiar to his constituency and regarding companies under government jurisdiction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): As I understand it, the House agrees that we now call it ten o'clock.

Agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

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

NORTHERN AFFAIRS—REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF DECISION TO PERMIT SEISMIC EXPLORATION ON BATHURST ISLAND

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, on April 1 I put some questions to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) in connection with whether or not the authority that he had given for exploration on Bathurst Island had been subject to the environmental impact policy which the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) had recently announced to the House. The minister replied in words that I can only say avoided the question. I quote his reply for *Hansard* for April 1, as reported at page 1024:

Mr. Speaker, there is in fact considerable co-operation between my department and that of the environment. We consult each other every time we are up against a problem, but decisions were taken, as they should, by my department and the Department of the Environment expressed no opposition.

In answer to a further question the minister replied:

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I make the decisions. Naturally, when problems come up, we have consultations with the Department of the Environment, and in this case that department had no major objection to the work under progress.

Those answers, of course, beg the question that was put to the minister, but I think it is of considerable importance that this House learn tonight whether or not the federal environmental assessment policy, which was recently put before the House and has been criticized not only by my party but by other parties, actually works. I was extremely critical at the time the Minister of the Environment put forward his environmental impact statement. I said, among other things, that the environmental impact policy that the government was putting forward was, first of all, secretive and, secondly, was not mandatory and that as a consequence the public could not be assured that in all cases that required it a mandatory environmental impact assessment would be made.

It is of interest to note that in the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee publication "Northern Perspectives" of December-January, 1974, Professor A. R. Lucas of the