

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

wants to go to Toronto on business, if a youngster wants to go to school there, it cannot be done unless there is someone with a vehicle to take them or unless they can afford the \$10 or \$12 for a cab to Owen Sound where they can take the bus to the population core of Ontario. It was the rural people who built this nation and now they are neglected.

As we argue for subways, for expressways, for better transportation in our cities, for the viability of communications between cities, we forget that the nation was built on communications across the country and the opportunity for people to move freely to other areas. In this town that I speak of there is no chance for anyone who is old or poor to move around. Surely, we could provide at least a token service; even service once a week would serve the small communities across the nation, whether this be done by again inaugurating some rail services or a transportation plan that is co-ordinated with the provinces.

We may argue that great things should be done for the cities but this country, which has been until now influenced by an east-west delineation rather than north-south, must not forget its obligation to people in the rural areas who have a right to communicate with and travel to those other parts of Canada where all modes of transportation are now concentrated.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to comment on some matters of local or regional concern because there is hardly a constituency in Canada that does not have a railway in it somewhere. I am told that is one of the difficulties.

I come from an area that was the original site of the western terminus of Grand Trunk Pacific, one of the railroads that went broke and had to be rescued by Canadian National. While I have not read any definitive history of the Canadian National to see what occurred, I have been told often enough that its purpose was to bring together a number of bankrupt or near bankrupt railroads that were started around the turn of the century or even before. Apparently, a lot of these railroads started because it seemed to be an easy way to make a quick buck. Grants of land were available in those days through the federal and provincial governments for the building of railroads and were obtained in many cases by people from other countries. Often the main purpose was not to build a railroad to connect one region or community with another, but was only to cash in on the generous grants that were available. It seems that the promoters in those early days did not particularly care whether the railroad functioned as a viable enterprise or not; they were not using their own money and the lands had been given to them by the government of the day so they had nothing to lose. These were the types of companies the CNR brought together.

We have been told so many times that the Canadian National Railways, having been formed for that purpose, guaranteed to the bond holders of those early defunct bankrupt railroads that they would not lose their money. This was one of the difficulties facing the CNR from the start.

Some members have given the House a good deal of information in the last couple of days. Some have made a statistical analysis of the position of the Canadian Nation-

[Mr. Fleming.]

al, listing its debt charges, its income and a variety of other bookkeeping details to show that it really does not have a fantastic debt. They maintain that the CPR is in a worse position by comparison and that the problem exists as a result of the incompetence and mismanagement of the CNR officials. I will accept the charge of mismanagement on the part of CNR officials because we know that exists and have seen it in action. However, for every instance of mismanagement in the CNR you can find a parallel in the CPR.

An hon. Member: Twice as many.

Mr. Howard: My friend opposite says you can find twice as many. I am trying to get at the point that the difficulties have arisen not because one is private enterprise and therefore sacred, while the other is under public ownership and therefore suspect; the difficulties have arisen because of the very structure of Canada, the manner in which the country became operative, the development of the railroad system, the quick buck artists at the turn of the century and the support of governments over the years, Liberal and Conservative, for the railway systems. Thus, we suffer from the absolute barrenness of vision of both this government and the one that preceded it. The present hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees) was minister of transport for a time in that Conservative government. That is why there are difficulties today. There is a lack of transport policy, and that lack is not associated particularly with any one political party or government. The fault lies with all of us in this chamber.

● (1530)

We look at a transportation policy from the point of view of the narrow interests of our own areas. We tend to want others in the country to be at a disadvantage. We may talk about a national transportation policy, but say, "Do not touch my home ground." We say, "By all means bring about reorganization, but do not touch the Newfoundland ferry service." Or, in another part of the country we may say, "By all means reorganize and restructure the rail transport system across Canada, but do not touch the Crownsnest Pass rates." We could go on ad infinitum talking about our approaches to transportation.

The direct connection between northern B.C. and the rest of the country is provided by the CNR. The north line of the CNR runs from the Jasper area in a general sense for about 1,000 miles westward, to Prince Rupert. I have talked to quite a few railroaders who work on that north line. Many have worked for the CN in other parts of Canada. What they have told me relates not simply to what might happen in the western region of the CNR, or to what the head office in Edmonton might say about the operation of the mountain region, or the western region. What they say applies all over the country. These railroaders, and I am also sure that this applies to the CPR because I have talked to men working for that company, do not feel the pride in their job that they once felt. There is no longer the long service conductor who began working for the railroad and wanted to work for 25, 30 or 35 years, until retirement.

Actually, you seldom see employees with 25 or 30 years of service on the railroad. You do not find that sense of