

Provision of Moneys to CNR and Air Canada

these trains. They should tell them the reasons behind this proposal. I know our senior CNR officials in Edmonton. They are reasonable men. They may have a good case. But a good case that is kept between the covers of a file folder is no case at all. They have a job to do with regard to public relations because they are as much a part of the communities of Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and all the points between Winnipeg and the Pacific coast that will be adversely affected by this decision, as, for instance, all those people who work on the CNR and live in the city of Edmonton and I are a part of the city of Edmonton.

• (4:20 p.m.)

I invite this House to support the amendment and give this bill as it now stands a six months' hoist.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I feel it is my duty to take part in this most interesting debate on Bill C-7 concerning the Canadian National Railways. The bill, which was introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), bears this title:

An Act to authorize the provision of moneys to meet certain capital expenditures—

And here I stress the word "capital", since my remarks will bear on it. I resume my quotation:

—of the Canadian National Railways System and Air Canada, for the period from the 1st day of January, 1969, to the 30th day of June, 1970, and to authorize the guarantee—of certain securities to be issued by the Canadian National Railway Company—

I suppose that these securities will be somewhat similar to those issued by Quebec Hydro: \$50 million in 9¾ per cent bonds in order to get the company in question deeper into debt.

Since the beginning of the debate many hon. members have expounded great theories about the C.N.R., but they have touched very lightly on the financial aspect of the question. I shall try, Mr. Speaker, to deal with it myself.

First, under this bill the government is asking the House to authorize the C.N.R. to make expenditures not exceeding \$201,700,000.

Secondly, the House is asked to approve credits of \$82,000,000 in order to enable the C.N.R. to discharge obligations incurred prior to the 1st day of January 1970 so as to repay part of the debt.

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

Thirdly, this company is asking us to approve credits in the amount of \$113 million, in order to finance some construction contracts that will be awarded before July 1, 1970.

When one considers the C.N.R. plans for the province of Quebec, one wonders what additions and what changes they are making, since they are always cutting the service in the province.

To top it all and to give the House the opportunity to show its liberality towards the Canadian National Railways, we are being asked to vote an additional amount of \$19 million for a loan to build new branch lines.

It all amounts to the nice total of \$415,700,000. This is then the matter before us.

I shall not try, like some members of the New Democratic party, to determine whether the C.N.R. is really a Crown corporation. What is important is that this Crown corporation is asking the House to vote the fantastic amount of \$415 million while, according to the MacPherson report, all Canadians are wondering whether the Canadian National Railways are really tailored to their needs.

Mr. Speaker, our ancestors built the Canadian railways system by the sweat of their brows to connect the different regions of Canada from sea to sea and, somehow, as it was mentioned during the constitutional conferences held before Confederation, to bring some provinces over to Confederation.

Today, the people are wondering about the policy of the Canadian National Railways. I am wondering also. Some say those are regional matters, but to me they are important and I suppose some of my colleagues ask themselves the same questions.

In my riding of Lotbinière, the Canadian National Railways are gradually losing ground, because they give way to other means of transportation, on the pretext that railways cannot face competition.

This region is far enough from the large centers, such as Montreal, Quebec City, Sherbrooke, and Trois-Rivières to be deprived of an adequate and efficient service.

In spite of those geographical problems—and it must be noted that those were initially the reasons for the construction of the C.N.R.—the Canadian Transport Commission decides, for an unknown reason, to abandon branch lines, to close down stations, to fire station-masters, to discontinue some services, especially passenger services.