

Committee on Railways and Shipping

that some assistance might be provided to the committee in order to review the accounts. I cannot see how that would be possible, Mr. Speaker; but I would hope that the figures would be presented to the committee in such a way and that they would be explained by the officials of the company so clearly that the members of the committee would fully understand what was covered by the accounts. I feel perfectly sure that if there were any doubts in their minds with respect to any item in the accounts the officers of the companies concerned would be anxious to give the fullest information with regard to them.

The hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Macdonnell) referred to the difficulty that we have all experienced in the past in comparing the operations of the Canadian National Railways with those of the Canadian Pacific. He referred to the decision of the board of transport commissioners concerning uniform accounts. I think it is probably generally known that a uniform system of accounting was introduced and became effective on January 1, 1956, so that while it will not be possible to compare the accounts of the two railways in respect of 1955 or earlier years, when we have the figures for 1956 it will be possible to make the kind of comparison that many people would have liked to have made in the past.

The hon. member for Greenwood also spoke about the question of the method of financing the expenditures of the railway. I do not think I can say anything useful on that point at this stage of the debate but I do suggest that when the committee goes into the question of the capital expenditures which are proposed to be made during the present year by Canadian National Railways, and when consideration is given to its other financial requirements, the hon. member for Greenwood will obtain the expressions of opinion which I think will enable him to form a judgment as to whether the practices now followed in the matter of financing Canadian National Railways expenditures are sound or whether they should be improved.

The hon. member for Saskatoon (Mr. Knight) in his remarks said that he did not think it was realistic when we insisted upon the necessity of making a profit. I think, Mr. Speaker, that so far as I am concerned I should at once repudiate any suggestion that I believe for a moment that it would be in the national interest for the Canadian National Railways or any other government agency to operate on the basis that it makes no difference whether or not it realizes a profit in its operations. I think that nothing could be more destructive of the morale of the men engaged in the railway operation or

[Mr. Marler.]

of the initiative and determination of the senior officials if the members of this house came to accept the belief that it does not make any difference whether or not the railway operates at a profit.

I think in our system it is essential that all enterprise, whether it be private enterprise or public enterprise, should have before it the goal of successful operation.

As I understand what was done some time before I became a member of this house when steps were taken to reorganize the capital structure of the Canadian National Railways, I assume that one of the principal purposes of that legislation was to restore to the Canadian National Railways the possibility of earning profits and thus in effect of doing the things that are likely to produce profits. I think we will all agree that in a general sense when an enterprise operates at a profit it is rendering service to the people it is intended to serve. I think it would be a great mistake for us to lose sight of the profit motive and to say that merely because this is a government enterprise we do not have to consider it.

The hon. member for Saskatoon also spoke about some quite minor matters; the fact that the Canadian National Railways had not seen fit to buy and operate what are called dome cars, and the fact that its running time between Montreal and Vancouver was, I think, two hours less than in the case of the Canadian Pacific and that as far as—

Mr. Knowles: Two hours longer.

Mr. Marler: I am sorry, I meant that the Canadian National running time was two hours more than the Canadian Pacific. These questions were dealt with in considerable detail in the committee last year. Mr. Gordon expressed the opinion that the use of dome cars was not in the view of the management of Canadian National Railways sufficiently profitable to the railroad to justify the rather heavy additional expenditures they would involve. He explained very fully that while in theory it would be quite possible for Canadian National Railways to equal the running time of the Canadian Pacific between Montreal and Vancouver, the service of passengers at the places en route had to be considered and their convenience was a greater factor than that of merely arriving within the same length of time as the Canadian Pacific itself.

A number of hon. members have spoken about the subject of pensions to retired employees of Canadian National Railways. I have nothing new to say on that subject. I think hon. members will realize that the difficulty of increasing the pension of a retired employee is just as great whether the amount