

*Transportation*

in their own areas. I can see in my mind's eye all those little stations which have not been painted for years, beside which grass is growing between the rusty tracks. I am surprised, though, that all this should have come to the attention of those hon. members only in the last few days of the present parliament. I heard their Minister of Transport outlining his great schemes, schemes which all hinge upon one simple proposition—user-pay. This means that if a line does not make money for the railways it ought to be closed down. The Minister of Transport is, without doubt, one of the most hard-headed, hard-headed, thick-headed ministers of transport we have had. If the story we have just heard had come to the attention of the former minister of transport he would, I am sure, have done something about it. But to the hard-headed minister we have now, nothing else matters except user-pay. He does not care about the service provided; just let the company show a profit at the end of the year.

We in this party have been saying for a long time that service, not profit, was the purpose of the railways. We own one of them and whether it makes a profit or not is, in our view, incidental to the provision of service. The bill before us is a private member's bill, so the idea is to solve the problem in a way which will not cost the taxpayers any money. To some extent, the hon. member is right. If the company were to decide to provide a service in the cheapest and most beneficial way possible, it is likely it would be profitable.

Not too long ago I attended a CTC hearing and shocked the CNR by supporting its application to drop passenger service between North Bay and Toronto. I might explain that the company did not really intend to drop it. All the company wanted was to get a subsidy so that they would be paid for whatever mess they had made along that route. They did not only screw up the CN, Mr. Speaker, they screwed up the Ontario Northland Railway as well. They did not care whether it was easier for passengers to get from Moosonee, Timmins, Kapuskasing, and other points, to Toronto. All they wanted was a huge subsidy. Ask them if they will sell the operation and allow someone else to operate it, and the answer is "No way".

● (1752)

I sympathize with the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson) when he refers to a very picturesque little railway on Vancouver Island. We are talking about the great expense of getting the Canadian people to travel and to see Canada. I have been to Vancouver Island many times, and I can think of no better way of seeing the beauty of Vancouver Island than to travel on that railway and visit the little communities along the railway. It would be particularly advantageous for eastern Canadians to do so.

In 1978 I expect that there should be some degree of comfort and that passenger trains should not have to travel over trestles which have been condemned for freight. I expect that there should be modern, up-to-date railways to provide service. The Liberal party has sat on its hands in this House and listened to the Minister of Transport talk for several years

about abandoning the transportation system in Canada, not making repairs and not updating it. The minister has been talking about abandoning the transportation system wherever it does not make a profit.

The minister says we should provide user-pay service, and that when it becomes profitable we should sell the operation piece by piece. He says we should sell only those sectors of transportation which are profitable. Hon. members opposite are not going to be able to go across the country during an election campaign and say that they are in favour of improving the system because they were too weak to stand up to the Minister of Transport, who has decided on a totally different policy. He is going to put money into Mirabel, into the turbo train between Montreal and Toronto and into that corridor to Windsor. Why? Because those publicly owned ventures will be profitable, and when they are, the minister will sell them. The government bought railroad cars to transport grain and lent them to the railways so that they can haul the grain without having to make that expenditure. Granted, the railways are losing money, but we are providing them with many components. Now they are asking us to fix roadbeds, upgrade stations and to do other things.

Like the hon. member for Comox-Alberni, I have a story to tell, but mine is about northern Ontario. The government of Ontario went to Europe and bought a train which the Europeans were no longer going to use. The train which was purchased is the train movies are made about. It is a beautiful little train. The Swiss, the Belgians, the French and others who were using that train were getting rid of it, so we brought it into Canada. The United States violently opposed its coming into North America because it is European built, has European parts and will need European repairs. Canadian National opposed it. The Canadian Transport Commission opposed it. They went over that train as if they were looking at a new aeroplane which would fly at twice the speed of sound. However, it was finally approved.

The train ran from Kapuskasing to Toronto. It was faster than any other mode of ground transportation. In Europe the train ran at 80 or 90 miles an hour. But what happened? Canadian National said the train had to fit into its time schedule and the CN did not want it going that fast on its track. CN did not want to meet the kinds of commitments which were possible with that kind of train. According to CN, the train started at the wrong time, arrived at its destination at the wrong time and sat on the track too much. Instead of making the trip from Timmins to Toronto in five or six hours the train was put on a schedule which would mean a longer trip than a trip by car. The train could travel safely and efficiently. It could provide a beautiful service and much quicker than any other mode of ground transportation. Let not the Liberals say they are now prepared to support proper transportation in areas other than urban areas where it would obviously be profitable. We know that has not been done yet, and we know that the Liberals have not voted for anything which would accomplish that.