

another \$50 million. Who knows? But they are prepared to invest in more shares of the Canadian National Railways.

The Minister of Finance does not even know what he is going to invest further in these 4 per cent, never pay, no dividend, no profit shares of the Canadian National system. And that is what the bill says and this is what we have before us for consideration. It is an impossible situation when you have a Crown corporation and a government which is prepared to shovel out money without coming to grips with the transportation problems faced by the nation, without coming to grips with the commuter problem spoken about this afternoon by the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. Stackhouse), and without coming to grips with the grain transportation difficulties spoken about so eloquently by hon. members from the west, without coming to grips with the situation concerning rail line abandonment, without coming to grips with the situation in which trains do not move along some lines even though those lines are not among those which have been abandoned.

A member of parliament tells the House that the last train that went through on his line was in February and the next train is scheduled to go through maybe in June, July, or maybe never. This is the kind of government that says it is running this country, and this is the kind of transportation policy we have. Yet here we have the Minister of Finance in this House prepared to say that he is entitled to subscribe to more capital stock in the Canadian National system based on 3 per cent of the gross earnings of that system in the year ending December 31, 1973, when he hasn't even got a financial statement for the year ending December 31, 1973. If he does have such a statement, he hasn't tabled it before this House.

Here we have an open-ended contract to pour money into a system without looking at that system and without coming to grips with the reality of the financial facts in the country. We are neither getting the service required by the people of Canada, nor are we getting the kind of performance and policy in transportation that the people of Canada demand. Even the Minister of Transport is unhappy. Yet the Minister of Finance is prepared to shovel out the money with the support of the New Democratic Party, because they really don't care about economics—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Are you going to vote against it?

Mr. Blenkarn:—and they really don't care about transportation. All they want to do is make sure that Crown corporations have more and more money, and they don't want to worry about performance. That may be their attitude toward their constituents. It certainly is not the attitude that my constituents would buy. The taxpayers of this country should certainly not be subjected to being continually asked to supply money without any real accountability of the management of Canadian National and Air Canada. These corporations have not necessarily served us well as has been admitted even by the Minister of Transport. He admits he has problems with these corporations. Yet we continue to have bills presented before this House to refinance Air Canada and the CNR.

What are we doing? We are taking public funds which could be put into housing, which could be put into com-

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

muter services, which are needed in many other areas, and we are pouring them in without any control of how these companies operate. These companies have clearly demonstrated that they are prepared to go into new fancy deals, buy up a piece of de Havilland, buy Canadian, get into the Wardair deal, run a company called Econair Holidays Limited. Yes, and build a tower in Toronto, and ask for money to put into a losing hotel chain. This is the kind of proposal we hear from the government and this is the kind of proposal the bill means. The bill means that the government has abandoned its responsibility to closely scrutinize the activities of the Crown corporations for which it is responsible, and the passage of this bill is an indictment of both the government and its helpers who are left.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Are you going to vote against it?

Mr. Blenkarn: The bill is a travesty. It is improper at the present time. The government should hold it back until it has made a thorough investigation of the national railway system and Air Canada. It should review the direction management is taking and then refinance this Crown corporation properly. Until now it has not been operated properly. The Minister of Finance should listen to his colleague, the Minister of Transport, in connection with transport policy, and say, "When you have got it organized, come and tell me and we will refinance it properly and make sure it is all right, and we shall all be with you."

There are a number of things which must be done in this country, but the bill before us does not require the CN or Air Canada to conduct their affairs properly and in the best interests of the public. It just shovels money out, money which they have proven in the past they are incapable of handling in a sensible fashion.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this late hour and I look across to my neighbour, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), with some sympathy, recalling that today, yesterday and earlier in this parliament he has sat here patiently listening to debate on a matter which really is only peripheral to him, a matter which in terms of responsibility should have been attended to by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand).

● (2150)

The fact that the minister has had to sit here is an indication—indeed, perhaps an indictment but certainly an indication—of the decrepitude to which transportation matters in this country have fallen. It is perhaps an indication, as well, of the truth of the statement made by the Minister of Transport that his department is indeed in a mess; that he found it in a mess when he took over the department. Certainly all of us know he has done nothing to clean up that mess since he has been there.

So my first words are words of sympathy to my neighbour, the Minister of Finance, for having to shoulder this responsibility. We all know he has tremendous responsibilities in the Department of Finance. Although we have divided opinions as to how he is carrying out his responsibilities, I think it is unfair to load on to his young shoulders the ineptitude of his colleagues.