

Canadian National Railways

Mr. Diefenbaker: It must have been a difficult task for him, bearing in mind the indifferent material with which he had to operate, to bring about the conversion of many ministers who had earlier ridiculed the whole idea.

Today the hon. member for Davenport and the hon. member for Outremont-Saint-Jean are also engaged in a program of conversion. I noticed today that the Minister of Finance has begun to show signs that his malleability has been dented. When crusaders like those two hon. gentlemen, the former minister of finance and the former secretary of state, go to work on behalf of great principles and the abiding things in which they believe, there is always hope. I look forward to finding, when the banking legislation comes before the house, that the immovability of the Minister of Finance will prove to have been merely the stand of one who, to adopt the Prime Minister's expression, has been fighting a sham battle against the certainty and thoughtfulness of two hon. gentlemen who, come what may, like Roderick Dhu, stand firm upon this rock.

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the right hon. gentleman permit a question?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes, surely.

Mr. Pickersgill: Is the right hon. gentleman saying that our two colleagues are visionaries in the same sense as he is?

Mr. Diefenbaker: If they have achieved the objective of their vision as successfully as we did, we know now what will be in the Bank Act. In other words, this has been an amazing transition. I can just see St. Paul looking down from above on the Minister of Finance and saying: Up to the present my conversion has been regarded as the greatest change of opinion of all time but now I must give first place to the Minister of Finance.

I say this, Mr. Chairman, as an example of what can be achieved. I was very surprised to hear the Prime Minister today refer to the stand of those who have stood so firmly and who have been supported so generally by the Minister of Finance as a sham fight. One wonders who is conducting the sham. But the Prime Minister did not complete his answer today. I use this simply as an example of what is happening.

Having stood so firmly when in opposition against the type of expenditure which would open these areas for mineral development, the Minister of Transport now becomes a

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

proponent of action about which he expressed grave doubts when we were in office. I only hope this will be a prelude to his introducing a national transportation policy. I believe he is giving a great deal of thought to this subject. I am told his hours are now spent in contemplation of legislation designed to bring about a national transportation policy and I wish him all good fortune in that direction. I hope that the fight he is now waging on that behalf will not be described by the Prime Minister a year or two from now as having been a sham fight.

Mr. Knowles: In the first part of his speech, before the Leader of the Opposition got shunted off onto a branch line—

An hon. Member: Off the rails.

Mr. Starr: He threw the switch himself.

• (5:10 p.m.)

Mr. Knowles:—he spoke as a member from Saskatchewan. He did so, noting that one of the branch lines we are being asked to approve takes into account the developments occurring in Saskatchewan, particularly with respect to potash. Perhaps I might be given a moment or two, as a member from Manitoba, to welcome the branch line being approved for my province and in doing so to follow suit to the Leader of the Opposition, but not too far. I am not going to get into the theological discussion he indulged in but I do wish to say that the branch line in Manitoba draws attention to the tremendous mineral developments taking place in the northern half of my province.

For many decades Manitoba's north was looked upon as a huge area supposedly desolate and waste, but now tremendous discoveries are being made of copper, zinc, nickel, gold and other metals. This is good for Manitoba and good for Canada. If, like the Leader of the Opposition, I felt like wandering off onto a branch line or two, I could argue about the methods being used to develop this mineral wealth, whether it should primarily be for the benefit of certain private corporations or for the benefit of the people of Manitoba, but that question is being fought in Manitoba at the present time.

When I first saw that the minister was going to move second reading of this bill today I wondered if it had any political purpose. Then I realized it could not possibly have any such purpose because the Manitoba line does not go into the Churchill constituency, where one more seat has yet to be decided in the provincial election, and even if it did