

Canadian National Railways

changes are taking place in Canada transportation, and all the while the government tries to make it appear as if no changes whatsoever were taking place. So, we have a perfect right to raise the questions being raised here, and to raise the sort of questions that the last three or four speakers this afternoon have raised. We shall continue raising them. Probably it is a good idea that the Canadian National system and Air Canada have to appear before us and account for themselves. I do not think anybody would be very happy if all this spending or lack of spending that we are discussing were to be dealt with by some committee of the House of Commons. We, therefore, make no apology for becoming involved with this matter.

I should like to raise a myriad of questions but will try to be reasonably brief, so that some of these matters that are raised can be considered by the managements of both systems and answered. For one thing, I can never understand why there should be a difference between first class and second class on aeroplanes. Why should people be crowded, as it were, in one part of the aircraft and others be given a little more flank room, if I can use that expression, in another part of the aircraft. I saw the worst instance of this discrimination last Saturday when I finally took a trip back to the Maritimes. On that Air Canada flight a television crew was flying to Halifax. Also on board was a very distinguished person who was to be photographed on the flight. As I say, there was a CBC crew on board with its flash bulbs and cameras and the like. This most distinguished, most photogenic person, was photographed in the second class part of the Air Canada aircraft that was flying to Halifax.

I asked this very distinguished and photogenic person, whose songs have made up a large part of the Canadian content on Canadian radio during the last few weeks—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCleave: —why she was now travelling second class when I felt sure that she could afford to travel first class and that her sponsors would insist on it. She said that it was not her fault; that she had made no arrangements like that. The CBC had checked with Air Canada and Air Canada had said “No, no; we cannot allow things like that to go on in the first class part of the aircraft.” Consequently, the photographs were taken in the second class part. There must have been four or five people in the first class part, yet this photogenic person had her picture taken in the second class part. I thought that an unfair distinction had been raised between first and second class passengers. I have not mentioned her name, even though her songs have made up a large part of Canadian content for, lo, these many months on Canadian radio. I thought I would raise this at the first opportunity in Parliament because there should simply not be a distinction as between first and second class on Air Canada. The criterion for where one sits should be extra length of one's legs, or one's extra girth, or whatever other physical reasons one can bring forward. The criterion, surely, in seating arrangements should not involve first and second class...

An hon. Member: Were the CBC people first class?

[Mr. McCleave.]

Mr. McCleave: No, not at all; not the people who did the picture taking. Nevertheless, the extremely photogenic person I have described, this consummate actress—I suppose I have given her identity away—was first class indeed. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say all this. I hope that she will talk to me the next time we make the same trip together.

Now, Sir, may I tell you about another adventure in real debt financing involving the Canadian National system? I have taken my crack at Air Canada; now may I take a crack at the Canadian National system? All this happened a few weeks ago when I went from Ottawa to Montreal on a Friday evening. On that occasion the main line between Montreal and Toronto had been “blown out” in some extraordinary fashion. As a result, all the Canadian National trains from Toronto to Montreal were coming up the Ottawa line and then finding the best route they could to their destination. We all gathered in the station which, as we all know, is a fair journey out by dog sled, or bus, or whatever form of travel one uses.

You are allowed on board the train when the officials are good and ready, after which the train goes off, lurching as the case may be to Montreal or Toronto. On this evening—the station was packed. We had to line up for half an hour and then were suddenly allowed on the train. We found that the train did not have enough space for all the passengers, and that there were no extra cars. This Canadian National train to Montreal, travelling on one of the most heavily travelled lines in Canada, I suppose, did not have enough space for the passengers. To be told by the conductor that they simply did not have those extra cars was one thing, but then to get 17 miles out of Ottawa on the route to Montreal and find that there has been a derailment between Montreal and Toronto, and that trains were being rerouted to Ottawa and then to Toronto, was another thing. Then, to find oneself submerged on a siding in Ontario for one hour while all those trains went by from Montreal to Ottawa and then to Toronto was still another thing.

• (4:40 p.m.)

But the thing that really shook me was that the people in the station who look after CN affairs knew there had been that derailment and knew there was this hold-up on the CN service toward Montreal. I realize that when there is an emergency you have to expect that the best is being done. I do not complain about that. But the fact is that no one was told before we left Ottawa for Montreal that this would take place. Not one soul told us that if we had to be there at a certain hour we were going to be delayed. Not one soul told us until we got under way that once you got aboard that train you might have to stand all the way to Montreal because there were not going to be enough cars. This is exactly the sort of thing which would prove to any passenger that the management does not give a damn about passengers, and that is exactly what happened on that journey.

I will tell you what I did. As soon as that train drew out of the station, I was told there were no seats available. I got in between two cars, you know, where they