

Transportation

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. gentleman does not want to misrepresent the situation. I did explain in my speech that a considerable part of these subsidies would in four or five years time be replaced by the specific subsidy in relation to branch lines that were retained and by another subsidy in relation to any passenger services that were retained. So that all subsidies are not going to disappear under this legislation. But we do think that the subsidization of railway wages is itself a very inflationary measure that adds to the costs of farmers and everybody else, and it is a tendency that ought not to be encouraged.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nasserden: I see that the minister obtained some applause from that side of the house for his intervention. The only difference is that a subsidy is shared all across the nation when the charge is written into the law. That is why we are concerned about this legislation, because in the past we have seen the centralization of industry in certain areas of Canada at the expense of other areas. We saw this particularly in the years prior to 1956.

We in western Canada, and I believe this applies also to those in the maritimes, believe we are also part of this nation. We want to be able to build industrial plants in our areas as well, and we want to build those plants not only because of the wealth they will bring to our own areas but because they will help to sustain a population that will enable us to cut the cost of services to the people we have in the less populated areas of the country as compared with the more heavily populated areas along the St. Lawrence river basin.

In his summary, on page 4 the minister also referred to the so-called bridge subsidy across northwestern Ontario of \$7 million a year. He said this would take place over a three-year period. I will leave that matter for other hon. members to deal with. I was very interested in one statement the minister made in introducing this bill. I found his speech most interesting. I say that for the benefit of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene) who is smiling. As reported at page 7988 of *Hansard*, the minister said:

I have the impression that something the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) said in connection with another measure might be appropriate. I am not going to quote him, because that would be against the rules, and I have forgotten his exact words, which is even more inhibiting. However, I believe I remember the sense very well, and it was this,

[Mr. Nasserden.]

that there were some things that could be done in a crisis that could not be done in ordinary times.

We also saw those headlines in the newspapers prior to the strike, and one cannot help wondering whether this government wanted the strike in order to bring in railroad legislation that was unpalatable to many people in this country.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the hon. gentleman on reflection will wish to withdraw that kind of imputation against any member of this house. I am sure he does not think that anyone in this house wanted to face the calamity of a railway strike in this country if there was any possible way of avoiding it.

Mr. Nasserden: I might agree that no one would like to face that calamity, but one cannot help drawing the conclusion from what we have heard and seen from this government that they viewed with a sense lacking alarm the possibilities that might accrue from such an eventuality, provided they could get it over with in a certain length of time. I think that is a poor recommendation for a piece of legislation as important as this particular measure now before us.

● (9:10 p.m.)

The minister has been asked whether he would consider allowing this bill to be sent to a committee before receiving second reading. I do not know whether or not he has changed his mind in that regard. He shakes his head that he has not. I believe there is a very good reason for sending this legislation to a committee before giving it second reading because I am of the opinion that substantial changes might be proposed after the committee has had an opportunity to study it. After all, and in the minister's own words, this is perhaps the most important measure ever to have come before parliament. The minister will not suggest that it is not important.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is the most important measure ever to have come before parliament. I am much more modest than that.

Mr. Nasserden: This is a modesty that frightens hon. members on this side of the house. We know the minister attaches a great deal of importance to this bill. I believe that to begin with he called this measure a revolutionary one. That was a year or two ago, at a stage when it was just hatching. There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that this is one of the most important pieces of legislation ever to