

Railway Act

basis that he is to maintain his mother, and then throws her out into the cold winter night—

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Regan:—the C.P.R. would keep only that part of its service for which it is responsible to the Canadian public that it feels like keeping. It wants to cast off its passenger service and other services which are of such great importance to keeping this country of ours tied together.

I merely quote that to illustrate the point that we are not dealing with an ordinary private enterprise when we ask this particular company to come and give an accounting to parliament each year.

Earlier this year the Canadian Pacific Railways did appear on an order of the house before a committee of the house when the subject of the proposed cancellation of the Dominion passenger service was under discussion. I suggest that if the house can make an order for their appearance in respect of that subject it should do so in respect of a great many other subjects. There are other matters which members of this house would like to question C.P.R. management about, including the same sort of thing we question C.N.R. management about—rail abandonment, branch lines operations in general, and passenger services. There are one or two other things we would like to question them about in particular.

During the past year a great many members of this house have received complaints from constituents who are employees of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company concerning the pension plan of that company and how the investment of the pension funds has been made, as well as how changes were made in the pension plan consequent upon the Canada Pension Plan, without consultation with the employees. We feel we should have a chance to ask management questions about these subjects and cross-examine them.

I have mentioned Canadian Pacific Railway Company investment in a subsidiary company which has been established to handle the non-railway operations of the C.P.R. This has an important bearing on the total financial picture of that company, and I think members of parliament should have the opportunity to question the company about this very considerable subsidiary which it has established and which now has an interest in many enterprises in Canada.

This bill is a very simple one and again I want to emphasize for the benefit of government members who may speak—because I would not want them to make the same mistake they made last time—that this is not

[Mr. Prittie.]

a bill to nationalize. That is a separate subject. This is simply a bill requiring railway companies, and particularly the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, which has such an important effect on the lives of all the people in many communities in Canada, to appear before the committee of the House of Commons and answer questions.

This might be a good thing for the management of the C.P.R. They are not very well liked at the present time. As a result of the appearance of Mr. Donald Gordon year after year before this committee, a certain grudging admiration has been built up for him on the part of members of parliament.

Mr. Knowles: Including the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire).

Mr. Prittie: Yes, including the hon. member for Lapointe. As I said earlier, it might be good democratic practice on the part of management of that company to appear and subject themselves to questioning by representatives of the people, whose lives are affected by the operations of this company from one end of Canada to the other.

Mr. Grant Deachman (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond (Mr. Prittie) rose to his feet to address us on Bill C-18 I became curious as to its exact purpose. The bill appears to be innocent enough, designed to enable the house to look at some statistical returns. Having heard it said so often by the Chair, and rightly so, that one must not impute motives to a member, I waited, without imputing anything, to learn what imputations were contained in this bill. I found that the bill was designed to enable the hon. member to make a speech about the C.P.R., and it was a very interesting speech indeed. I want, however, to stick a little closer in my remarks to the bill itself than did the sponsor.

There are some things contained in this bill which are of considerable interest. I want to touch upon some of the remarks made by my hon. friend. In the explanatory note the hon. member has stated the following:

The purpose of this bill is to permit parliament to inquire into, as is done with the publicly-owned Canadian National Railways, the financial structure and the operations of those private railway, telegraph, telephone and express companies and carriers by water which come under the Board of Transport Commissioners as public utilities and quasi-monopolies.