

brought us into the jet age, but the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) and his predecessor have been keeping us in the prop age.

To give one rather meaningful illustration of what I am talking about, Charlottetown Airport has seating space for about one-third of the load of the aircraft that use the airport. Surely, this cannot be very clever planning. You would think someone in the department would come up with a better solution than that. I have made no mention of other requirements, such as a restaurant, lounges and all the rest, which the people in upper, central and western Canada have. We do well to have a coffee machine that works, yet we are one of the great tourist centres of Canada.

Why is it important to assist our tourist industry? Because Prince Edward Island does not have all that many other avenues for economic achievement and advantage. Surely, it is sound sense, sound administration and good government to develop such comparative advantages as a region or a province has. The movement of our choice agricultural products and fine products of the sea, as well as the rapid and comfortable movement of an ever-growing number of tourists,—all are important. The responsibility for this movement lies squarely on the Department of Transport, and largely on Canadian National Railways, the corporation we are discussing today and which our predecessors have discussed down through the years.

Our main concern is that some move be made to give us a more comfortable airport. I am pleased that some important steps—and they are important steps—have been taken to upgrade our airport in terms of safety facilities and so on. EPA has an outstanding safety record, and I think we now have pretty up-to-date technological improvements in that important area in the airport. Most Prince Edward Islanders have to fly Air Canada when they leave EPA because it is a regional carrier, so they are also concerned about the other aspects mentioned by previous speakers. I never thought it was very clever when the ticket office and the main ticketing process was moved from Ottawa to somewhere else. I am strongly opposed to any downgrading of service of any kind by the government for the nations capital. I noted the expression used by the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Hales) today, and I think he is quite right.

Here I join with the hon. member for Bruce in calling for some attention to be paid to what members are saying and to what the committee is doing. I do not pretend that I am always a member of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, but I have the conviction that it is a committee that works very hard and has come very close to both the frustrations and the wishes of the people of Canada. I have looked over the reports of that committee and the evidence to come before it, not only with reference to the matters mentioned by my hon. friend from Bruce but with regard to the transportation situation all across Canada, and I would agree that, had the government and some minister listened and done something about the committee's recommendations, we would have had a great diminution of the kinds of grievances which pervade the generality of Canadian citizens when they think or talk about the two great carriers, Air Canada and the CNR. I should like to hear members of the House

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

say that Air Canada is the finest airline in the world; but they would not be listening to what their people say if they did that.

I am sure none of us enjoys denigrating or criticizing Air Canada or Canadian National Railways. In a sense, Canadian National Railways was, in part, the creation of one of the greatest Canadians who ever lived, Sir Robert Borden. He saw what had to be done, and with his usual pragmatic commonsense, when someone was twitting him and saying "You don't believe in government-owned railways, do you?", he replied "I would rather a government-owned railway than a railway-owned government". And that was not so far fetched at that time.

● (1650)

We want to get away from this apology for our national services. We want to be proud of them. We want to see that the CNR and Air Canada are the best, but they regrettably have a long way to go until that time comes about. I believe it is our job, and the job of members of the committee, to speak out and to criticize if necessary as well as offer constructive suggestions where practical in order to bring about an improvement in the service. We must prevail upon these bodies to do much more than merely come here for money in order to discharge the great responsibility and immense trust which is theirs. Because it is theirs, it is also ours.

I believe we should stop this sloppy procedure and should, as one of the high priorities of this session and as one of the high priorities of the Parliament of Canada, listen to some of the cries of members who know the problems. We should be moving very fast because things are becoming worse. We read of more trouble in Air Canada, such as resignations and so on. This is not good enough. It is not good enough to vote sums of money and then forget about it. The problems are here. The situation is serious and it calls for remedial action.

Mr. Elias Nesdoly (Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-164 is a bill to authorize the provision of moneys to meet certain capital expenditures of the Canadian National Railways system and Air Canada. This is a publicly owned transportation system in this country. The bill calls for an expenditure of \$225,500,000. At the outset, I should like to say I have great reservations about this bill for a number of reasons. One reason for this exercise is that the CNR started out with the debts of bankrupt railways and has been saddled with these debts since.

I should like to quote a letter from the National President of the Canadian Railways Employees Pension Association in order to give the historic background. This letter was written in March this year and reads:

The CNR came into existence in 1923 through the consolidation of a number of bankrupt railways which the government could not allow to go into receivership, for fear that the public and private credit of the nation would be impaired. One of these railways was the Grand Trunk Railway, which was British owned and directed from London. Since more than 70 per cent of the foreign investment capital in Canada between 1900 and 1913 came from the London market, \$1,753 million out of a total of \$2,545 million, the government was reluctant to allow the company to default. The other major company taken over by the government was the Canadian Northern, which had borrowed heavily on its securities from the Bank of Commerce. To allow the railway to go into receivership would have caused the bank's failure and financial panic. The CNR system's future profitability was further