

Committee on Railways and Shipping

ago. He was known nationally and internationally as the grand old man of the hotel business. He owned and operated some of the greatest and largest hotels in the United States, but he started off in Canada.

An hon. Member: With the C.N.R., too.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): The citizens of the United States are capable, ingenious and admirable in all respects, but Canadians are equally so and I think they are entitled to prove their worth in the top positions of this new hotel.

Then there is another argument put forward by the government in favour of the agreement with Hilton—and we are coming to the end of the possible arguments the government can advance. It is that advantage will be gained from association with a large hotel chain like this not only through obtaining specialized personnel but also through purchasing practices and in other ways.

Perhaps this argument would be valid if the new hotel were a separate body and had no other association. But one must remember that the hotel is part and parcel of the great Canadian National Railways complex. It does not exist by itself in a vacuum. It is associated with the Canadian National Railways. The Hilton corporation and its associated organizations have assets of around \$230 million; that sounds rather impressive. The Canadian National has assets of about 10 times that amount. Hilton does \$190 million worth of business in a year, but the Canadian National does about three times that amount.

In other words, you are not really bringing in a corporation which is any more powerful, which is any bigger or which has any greater facilities. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that under these circumstances there is very little Hilton can offer to the partnership that the Canadian National could not supply from its own resources. The Canadian National has lawyers, accountants, engineers, economists, a sales force and advertising men. They have all sorts and types of personnel they could use in this operation for guidance and counsel, without having to ask for it from the organization the government has selected.

I am not anti anything in this regard, Mr. Speaker, but I am pro-Canadian in these circumstances. I have a sort of fierce pride and reasoned belief in the ability of Canadians to meet the challenge of these days, to rise to that challenge and accomplish that which they must accomplish if we are to retain the leadership which is ours and which, God willing, will continue to be ours. I have no sympathy with those who feel, for whatever reason, that we should play a secondary role to any other nation or any particular people.

[Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace).]

It seems to me that some of the arguments I have advanced here today show there could be some reasonable doubt as to the wisdom of this hotel arrangement. I think that is putting it very mildly indeed. I feel that this government is guilty of several charges in this connection. The first and greatest charge of which they are guilty is that they have not had confidence in the ability of Canadians to operate a property which Canadians, with their industry, their foresight and thrift, have managed to procure the capital to erect. They lack confidence in Canadians. Second, I think they are guilty of not giving information to this house to which this house is fully and legitimately entitled. Third, Mr. Speaker, I think the government is guilty beyond question of attempting to thrust an agreement down the throats of the members of this house and the people of Canada without taking into their confidence the members of this house or the people of Canada to the extent that they might make their own decisions.

When the day comes that the gentlemen who sit on those treasury benches can make these decisions by themselves, without taking the people of this country into their confidence, it will be a sorry day for Canada. I believe that in this particular case that day has arrived. I hope the government will rectify the situation in very short order.

(Translation):

Mr. Andre Gauthier (Lake St. John): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to extend this debate; I would like nevertheless to take this opportunity to mention once again a matter which has long been debated but is still timely, namely the construction of the St. Felicien-Chibougamau railroad. Hon. members will recall that last December I placed on the order paper of the house the following resolution:

That in the opinion of this house, the government should consider the advisability of taking whatever steps are necessary for the early construction of the eastern section of the St. Felicien-Chibougamau-Beattyville railway, for the purpose of connecting the lake St. John industrial district with the Chibougamau mining centre.

That resolution was not the first representation I had made in favour of this project; it was but the conclusion of constant and continuous efforts for the logical and rational development of the rich mining resources of the Chibougamau district.

In fact, I was the first in the house to request the extension of the Canadian National Railway lines to encourage the development of our large natural resources, which are so abundant in the Chibougamau district as well as in the lake St. John region.