

Supply—Transport

economy of our country is concerned. A sham battle is not in the interests of anyone concerned. It is not in the best interests of any corporation or citizen, nor is it in the best interests of the economy. Statements made in the press for publicity purposes do not mean anything if the actual operations belie the statements. These matters are of such importance at this time that I hope the minister will clarify the situation. I hope he will tell us whether or not the government is facing up to the problem of a national transportation policy for Canada and, if so, what is being done about it.

Transportation is a vital necessity in our country, and it should be placed on a practical, efficient basis. I do not need to point out that Canada is a vast country, approximately 4,000 miles across and one third larger than the United States in size. Canada is an export nation. In the final analysis the efficacy or inadequacy of Canada's transportation system can make or break this country in terms of it occupying a major role in the export field. Perhaps the minister would give us an indication of what is really taking place in the field of transportation.

Until a few years ago the Canadian Pacific Railway provided a ferry service between the British Columbia mainland and Vancouver island. A few years ago the service was terminated during certain periods of the year because the company was losing money. No competition had to be met by sea, although Trans-Canada Air Lines provided competition by air. T.C.A. still operates a competitive service and the number of flights between Vancouver and Patricia bay is now at an unprecedented level.

What happened? Because of the deteriorated condition of the C.P.R. service the government of the province of British Columbia felt that it had to take action. This is a government which abhors anything of a socialist nature, is opposed to public ownership and is fully in support of free enterprise. This government decided to go into the ferry business, and built two large modern ships to ply between the British Columbia mainland and Vancouver island. I recently read in the newspaper that in the first 12 months of its operation the government ferry service made a profit of approximately \$800,000. The operation has been so successful that two additional ships are being built. Apparently private enterprise failed in this field through the C.P.R., and public ownership through the service provided by the government made a profitable return. The position of the government ferry service is similar to that of Polymer and Eldorado in the federal field. This leads one to speculate about the policy of the C.P.R.

in operating this service and allowing it to deteriorate to a point at which the provincial government had to move in.

The three fields about which I am curious and concerning which I should like a full statement from the minister are the passenger services of the railways, the trucking industry on our highways and the steamship services. I ask the minister to do something that no minister of transport has ever done. I urge him to give the committee a full exposition of all aspects of transportation policy. I urge him to give us an explanation of the difference between the statements made by those in control and what we see as a result of the actual operation. Most important of all, I ask the minister to give us an indication that the government recognizes the seriousness of the situation, and to tell us what is being done to provide a national transportation policy for Canada so we may have a profitable transportation system that will benefit the economy and the Canadian people.

Mr. Payne: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a question of privilege affecting the rights and privileges of all hon. members of the House of Commons and regarding the opportunity provided us to discharge our responsibilities to those who placed us in this chamber, the electorate of Canada. I refer to the inability of members to be recognized by the Chair. I suggest that it would be right and proper in this situation to revert from committee so that I may discuss this question in some detail with Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Chairman, I think this is an extremely unusual procedure. I did not know it was the practice when we were in committee of the whole as we are now, discussing the estimates of the minister, to ask us to call the Speaker back into the chair to discuss a question of privilege that could have been raised earlier when the Speaker was in the chair and that could, I suppose, be raised later today or even tomorrow. On its face it would appear to me to be an unusual procedure, and I do not think we should be called upon to interrupt our present proceedings.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Chairman, I wish to ask the hon. member who raised this question of privilege what he means. As I recall our rules the hon. member can follow this course in only one way. He is challenging you, sir, as chairman of the committee and is saying in effect that Your Honour has a bias in the recognition of speakers. If that is what the hon. member means he should say so directly. He appears to be accusing Your Honour of having a bias in the recognition of speakers.

The Chairman: Whether or not the hon. member's statement represents a challenge