

Canadian National Railways Act

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, I cannot say at this time what the judgment of the unemployment insurance commission may be in respect to this matter.

PUBLIC SERVICE

HECTOR MCKINNON—INQUIRY AS TO
EMPLOYMENT

On the orders of the day:

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillin-gate): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Finance if Mr. Hector McKinnon is acting for the government in any capacity at the present time and, if so, what capacity?

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I thought it was well known that Mr. Hector McKinnon is the leader of the Canadian delegation to the negotiating conference under GATT auspices at Geneva, and has been acting as such from the outset of that conference. He has been in Geneva for something like eight months and is, of course, continuing in that capacity.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS ACT

AMENDMENT INCREASING NUMBER OF DIRECTORS

The house resumed from Tuesday, May 16, consideration of the motion of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Balcer) for the second reading of Bill No. C-94 to amend the Canadian National Railways Act.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillin-gate): Mr. Speaker, when the business of the house was interrupted at five o'clock yesterday afternoon I was in the midst of a speech on this very important bill. Since some question arose last evening about the respective importance of this bill and another measure that was before the house forecasting a bill I wish to make it abundantly clear that I regard this bill as of very little importance at all, and so do we on this side of the house. We think it is highly inappropriate to be concerning ourselves about changing the number of directors of the Canadian National Railways when there are so many important and urgent problems before this country.

An hon. Member: Let us pass it, then.

Mr. Pickersgill: An hon. member says "Let us pass it". We do not think even the waste of this money is justified at this time. That is the reason we do not want to pass it. We do not think this parliament should be asked to engage in further expenditures of public money at a time when we have deficits that are more nearly astronomical than anything this country has ever known before in peacetime, and that are rapidly exceeding those we

[Miss LaMarsh.]

had in world war II. When the unemployment insurance fund is bankrupt, when the government has not brought down—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member's line of argument seems to be taking quite a different turn from that suggested by the subject matter of the bill. It would not be appropriate to debate the many matters which might be of importance simply to illustrate the point that this bill is not important.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am really rather astonished at the observations of Your Honour, which I do not take to be a ruling. I have been a member of this house for eight years and have witnessed its activities since 1938. I have never before heard it suggested that an hon. member cannot say that one of the principal objections to a bill is that it is taking up the time of parliament when other much more important matters should be engaging the attention of parliament.

Having made that point I was simply citing—and I was not going to debate any of them—some of the important matters that ought to be before us rather than this measure, matters that should be proceeded with, particularly in view of the fact that on April 24 this house decided, over some opposition, to sit exceptionally long hours to consider the important and urgent business of the country.

This is a sample of the kind of important and urgent business that Her Majesty's advisers bring before us, this bill to raise the number of directors from seven to 12, another stopgap measure such as the one we debated before this and the horse racing bill that we had earlier this week. The only matter of any consequence that we have had in this house up to noon on Wednesday is the war veterans allowance measure, on which there was unanimity and which could have been disposed of and sent to the committee by now if Her Majesty's advisers had had some important business to bring before us, which they had not. That is our complaint.

Mr. Churchill: Nonsense. May I ask the hon. gentleman a question?

Mr. Pickersgill: Certainly.

Mr. Churchill: Why is he so anxious to terminate the debate on an important measure like one to amend the War Veterans Allowance Act?

Mr. Pickersgill: I am not anxious to terminate debate on that measure at all. However, it seems to me that congratulatory speeches about the Minister of Veterans Affairs, one after another, are not debate.

Mr. Jones: On a point of order—