

*Canadian National Railways*

my hon. friend has mentioned, they replaced the linen with paper mats. This, I charge, was part of their over-all plan to incur losses with a view eventually to eliminating the service completely.

Canadian National's plan has been opposed by almost every Newfoundlander, with one or two exceptions. As I have already stated, the proposed action is contrary to the recommendations of two royal commissions on transport in Newfoundland. Almost every organized body in Newfoundland has objected to it. Our unions and our municipal councils have all voiced strong objection to the action of Canadian National.

The people of Newfoundland too are opposed to the withdrawal of rail passenger service, but their wishes are being completely ignored both by Canadian National and by the present government. I might inform this committee that dozens, even hundreds, of communities will be condemned to virtual isolation by this bureaucratic decision that has been taken in Ottawa. Let me inform the committee, the Minister of Transport and any other minister who is interested that, having removed itself from under the umbrella of colonial government, Newfoundland does not intend to become a colony of the bureaucrats in Ottawa.

I believe an hon. member has already remarked that rumours are rife here, but I heard a rumour that I am inclined to think has some foundation. It has been stated both publicly and privately that there was prior agreement between the present president of the Canadian Transport Commission and the Newfoundland government to discontinue our passenger train service. It has been alleged by a large number of people that in return for the federal government undertaking to assist substantially the Newfoundland government to complete the trans-Canada highway, our provincial government would not object to the elimination of the train passenger service. To the best of my knowledge, at no time has any member of the Newfoundland government, the chairman of the transportation commission, the Minister of Transport or indeed any member of the federal government denied this charge. Indeed, I will go a step further and here and now challenge the president of the Canadian Transport Commission, the premier of Newfoundland or any member of his government to answer the charge publicly by either admitting or denying it.

[Mr. Carter.]

In recent months the Prime Minister has paid lip service to the so-called just society and the elimination of regional disparities. I would therefore urge him and his colleagues to join the people of Newfoundland in their desperate fight to obtain justice and equal rights in the matter of our rail passenger service. I suppose I should not say this, Mr. Chairman, because my colleagues might not approve, but if the Prime Minister of Canada and his colleagues were to join the people of Newfoundland and were to restore to us that which is ours, they would become heroes in Newfoundland. I ask him and his colleagues to join us in our fight to retain that which is rightly and traditionally ours.

In view of the remarks of the Prime Minister in connection with regional disparity and a just society, I would ask him and his government this afternoon to take whatever steps are necessary to set aside the decision of the Canadian Transport Commission and to instruct Canadian National that, while they may be allowed to keep their buses running along the roads, they are not going to be allowed to discontinue their rail passenger service.

For the benefit of other members who perhaps are not too familiar with the terms and conditions under which Canadian National is allowed to abandon rail services, let me inform them that 39 passenger buses were introduced into service. These buses are to operate in conjunction with the rail passenger service until April next year. If the service is successful then the C.N. has the right to discontinue its trains and to operate with buses.

In all sincerity and honesty, Mr. Chairman, I ask whether this is a fair trial. Can we take the winter of 1969 as a forerunner of the sort of winter that we will have in 1970, in 1971, in 1972 and thereafter? It has even been the case in Newfoundland that there has been a mild winter with not too much snow. In those conditions it is quite possible that a bus service would be reasonably successful, that the buses would not get stuck on the trans-Canada highway for 70 hours, thereby sparing the president of the Canadian National and president of the Canadian Transport Commission the inconvenience and bother of being stranded.

As I say, Mr. Chairman, if the Prime Minister is sincere in his aim and desire to create a just society, to put an end to regional disparity, then I plead with him to instruct the Canadian National to run their buses and also to keep their trains running for another