Inquiries of the Ministry

Speaker. Since, as the Prime Minister mentioned, this matter is now before the Canadian Transport Commission and since the Canadian Pacific Railway specifically agreed prior to construction getting under way to make full provision for passenger and other transportation, will not the Prime Minister, in light of this historical background, consider having the government of Canada represented by counsel before the Canadian Transport Commission so that the government can oppose any action by the CPR-I am dealing at the moment only with the CPR-which is contrary to the provisions upon which the CPR received so much consideration prior to construction?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the statute provides certain ways in which the federal government can act. We will wait to see if it is necessary to act in one way or another, and we are prepared to take our responsibilities seriously.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. member for Prince Albert referred to the undertaking by the CPR in 1881 under which it promised to operate the railway forever for the benefit of the people of Canada. Considering the provisions of the National Transportation Act, which make it possible for the CPR to ask for subsidies of up to 80 per cent if it can prove losses in certain particulars, will the Prime Minister not discuss with the Minister of Transport the urgent need to place before the Canadian Transport Commission Canada's interests as opposed to the interests of Canadian Pacific?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the Transport Commission was set up precisely to represent the public interest. The representations of the hon. member and of hon. members of other parties are well known. I think everyone in this country realizes that that railway company was given certain advantages in the west, including large grants of lands, in return for certain services. I know this as well as the right hon. member for Prince Albert, as does everyone else. We established the Canadian Transport Commission by statute: I do not think the House should panic because the railway companies are following the procedures that we set up under that law and which they are required to follow.

Mr. Lewis: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I ask the Prime Minister in all seriousness whether, in view of the behaviour of

the Canadian Pacific Railway over the last number of years and particularly in view of this present attempt to get out of a service which in law they undertook to provide, if the time has not arrived to consider seriously bringing the Canadian Pacific Railway under public ownership?

Mr. Diefenbaker: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Lest there be any mistake, I could not even indirectly agree to that proposition. Is it not a fact that government counsel have appeared before the former Board of Transport Commissioners and have placed various propositions before that board? This matter affects the people of Canada, and surely the government will not regard it as panic to place the views and propositions of this Parliament before the Transport Commission.

Mr. Speaker: I suggest that the last two supplementaries are argumentative.

Mr. Robert Simpson (Churchill): A supplementary question to the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the operations of Canadian National Railways with which the government possibly has closer liaison. Will the Prime Minister assure the House that the government will make efforts toward influencing Canadian National Railways as much as they possibly can to continue passenger services now being operated in remote areas of Canada and which are necessary to the survival of the people in those areas?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not mind suggesting to the Minister of Transport that he should, to use the words of the hon. member, influence this Crown corporation. I have suggested in the past weeks that I would try to influence other crown corporations, but the House did not consider that was a proper procedure. However, I will ask the Minister of Transport to use whatever influence he has over this publicly owned corporation. I should like to add, Mr. Speaker, in reference to a previous question, that I fail to see how taking over the Canadian Pacific Railway would solve this particular problem because we have in the CNR a Crown corporation which nevertheless needs to be influenced a little bit.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon, member rising on a point of order?

Mr. Simpson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I point out that in relation to