

and I spent last Friday evening with railroaders. I remember the town of Rainy River when dieselization came in, and the tragedy it suffered, as well as many other areas. So nobody is going to tell me what to say about railroads.

Mr. Lundrigan: I didn't mean you.

Mr. McRae: Mr. Speaker, when I have occupied as much time on the floor of this House as the hon. member I am sure I will not need notes.

Mr. Lundrigan: We accept you, but pros like Joe we don't.

Mr. McRae: I am speaking about what is involved in this motion partly because I am a frequent visitor to the area concerned and am aware of the feelings of the people about the matter. However, I am also concerned about the discontinuance of passenger service in my own area and throughout the rest of Canada. This is something about which all Canadians must be concerned.

In many respects my views on this subject are not too different from those of the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate, but I would like to get to the root of the problem. I do not think the root of the problem is essentially the CTC, although it may be one of the offshoots of the root. I find it hard to believe that the railways of this country are really serious about their role, and especially do I say this about the CPR although it applies also to the CNR. Both railways lack an aggressive approach. Where are our railroads when there is a discussion of rapid transit systems? These are the companies which have the rights of way, the equipment, the money for development and apparently the technology. What sums of money have they put into research and development? Very little, Mr. Speaker.

Trains today are travelling at about the same speed as they were 50 years ago. Except for the diesel engine and a few improvements in bearing-lubricator techniques, nothing has been changed. One has only to look at the dates that rail cars were built, when a freight train is moving past, to realize how old is much of the equipment. A lot of it was built in 1929, 1932 or 1941. Where were the railroads when the controversy over the Pickering airport began? What other sections of industry would pass up the opportunity to suggest a rapid ground transportation system in this area as an alternative to the airport?

Where are the railroads in the present energy scene? We are told that fuel-wise, rail travel is by far the most efficient. In fact, the figures show that as opposed to air travel, per passenger mile we use about a quarter to one-sixth the fuel on a railroad as would be used on an airplane. Would fuel conservation not dictate that we have another good look at passenger rail transportation?

Where were the railroads when the possibility of a unit train system was discussed in lieu of an oil pipeline down the Mackenzie Valley? Only reluctantly and very lately has the CNR shown signs of interest in such a project. And what is \$1½ million compared to \$40 million to \$50 million spent by the aggressive pipeline industry?

It is unfortunate, perhaps even disastrous, that in a nation which requires rail transportation so much we are dependent on railroads which, for various reasons, are not really interested in developing new business. It seems to

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me that the CPR would be glad to get out of the business and that the CNR is so used to playing second fiddle that it has never thought of an initiative of its own.

I believe that the National Transportation Act and the Railway Act must be seriously amended or, better still, completely revamped to provide the kind of thrust that we expect of our railroads. I would like to go into this question in detail if I had a much longer period of time, but this evening I shall make just one or two short comments. I would like to see these acts amended in order to put control over the railroads back into the hands of parliament and of the government of Canada. I am not happy when I hear the minister reply to questions saying that he will ask the president of one or the other major railway company for co-operation. When the national interest beckons, as it does today in connection with grain movement from the west through Thunder Bay, the minister must have the power to command the railroads to meet the emergency.

It is my understanding that when the railways desire a change, and a change invariably means a change upward in freight rates, they merely have to inform the CTC, and so be it. I repeat that control over the railroads must be given back to the Parliament of Canada. Another change has to do with rail passenger service. It is my understanding that when the railroads want to apply for a subsidy, they must apply for discontinuance of service. In order to achieve this, it is my experience that they deliberately downgrade the service and then, when the volume falls off, they ask for discontinuance.

Just recently the CPR laid off 22 ticket agents and operators in northwestern Ontario and Manitoba. As a matter of fact, the senior clerk in Thunder Bay was laid off on September 30, in contravention of Bill C-217, if not the letter then the spirit of section 16(3)(a), which calls for the arbitrator to give serious attention to adopting a job security plan based on the principle of attrition. Fewer tickets will be sold as a result of this action, and when the volume of usage falls off the railways are free to seek increased subsidies. This is a silly provision. I am in favour of subsidies, but subsidies for providing service. The act should reward the railroads for upgrading service, not for short-changing the public.

When a railroad ceases to operate a service in an area, something goes out of the area. It is time to reappraise the role of the railroads in Canada and to upgrade this role. At a time when fuel shortages dictate a more aggressive rail policy, it is time for the Parliament of Canada to lean heavily on the railroads to force them to play a more aggressive role in providing better service, including passenger service, to the people in southwestern and northwestern Ontario and in the rest of Canada.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour allotted for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. May I remind hon. members that the 40 hours set aside under the terms of the Standing Orders for private members' business are now exhausted. This is being said in conformity with the disposition of paragraph 6 of Standing Order 15. There will be no private members' hour from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays from now until the end of the current session.

At six o'clock the House took recess.