

*Transportation*

Mr. Speaker, I have visited personally in the Ottawa area, railwaymen who work on railway construction and have to stay away from home for whole weeks on end. I went to see the cars in which they live and I may state that conditions regarding sanitation and cleanliness are repulsive. Such conditions are inadmissible in this era. For instance, to quote only one example, it seems to me that blankets should be washed more often than once every five or six months. To me that would appear to be elementary. The same applies to the sanitation. It would appear that it has not yet been understood that we no longer live in the era that we, older people, have known—where some of those sanitary services were lacking, where there was, especially for those coming from the country, only a pump and, sometimes, only a well in the yard to supply us with water, and where, for lack of other sanitary services, we sometimes had to take a walk to the back yard. Well, conditions are no longer like that; such a situation is not admissible in 1966, especially if one wishes to say that all possible measures are being taken to keep the railwaymen's morale high. Therefore, those people have complaints.

Next, there is the question of forthcoming automation; evidently, that is even more important but I shall not venture into it. However, I would ask hon. members to understand the anguish of those people who have spent 10, 15 or 20 years with the railways and who believe that by reason of automation, they will perhaps be dismissed, their training making them ill-prepared to secure employment elsewhere. They expect that the government, through its Canadian transport commission, or perhaps through the agency of the Department of Manpower, that is to be established, will guarantee to them a sort of rehabilitation, in short, a change of job inside the company if, eventually, automation should mean the loss of their livelihood.

Mr. Speaker, we must keep in mind, while we are revising the Railway Act—because not only the interest of the companies is to be considered, once again—that there is not only the financial interest to be considered, but that we must take into account the human aspect. We must not forget that.

At this stage, Mr. Speaker, I will make a more personal comment. I know that some members of this house will find that we are discussing this at right and wrong moments,

[Mr. Mongrain.]

and I know that it will probably hurt certain members of this house. However, I wish to remind them that we have no intention of engaging in destructive criticism. If they feel hurt by my remarks, they should keep in mind that we were hurt for a long time when we were, shall I say, victims of certain omissions, certain errors. I am telling this to the hon. minister, knowing his good disposition, expecting that he will want to take measures so that errors will not be committed as they were before.

On page 3 of the bill, Clause 6, it is stated that a board of 17 members will be created. I ask myself immediately: will there be a reasonable number of competent persons among the 17 members, be they from the province of Quebec or elsewhere? Will there be any? I have been assured that there would be, Mr. Speaker, on another occasion when we were dealing with the National Arts Centre. I was told: there is no need for those things to be written in black and white in the act, because we mean well and this will be done.

I believe that this is generally the case. I feel parliament has dealt with the French Canadian element in Canada with probably more fairness than most of the previous parliaments. I am ready to state this in all frankness, but I must also say that there are still a few things which worry me. I remember, in particular, when the corporation was created for the administration of the Ottawa station, I saw five English names and not one French name. I told myself: is it possible that there could not be a French Canadian in the 10 provinces who would possess the necessary qualifications to be a member of this corporation? And you will understand why this worries me.

I repeat this for the fourth or fifth time, and do not interpret my speech as being in any way separatist; I am one of those who wish to make a serious attempt at federalism and I am ready to make the necessary sacrifices; but I am telling those who do not believe we have a generation of young French Canadians who are angry, because they examine the history of confederation over the past century and they are not satisfied with the treatment they have received, and they are the first instigators of separatism, since they do not act with due fairness toward those people.