

*Canadian National Railways and Air Canada*

tion, that there has been a serious breakdown of the dispatch system in the organization of the railroads. There has been an abandonment of the recognition that a perishable product has to be shipped promptly and that it cannot be allowed to rest on the siding. There has been an abandonment of the policy which kept cars rolling and thus utilized. I am wondering to what extent this abandonment of efficient dispatch has contributed to the car shortage which exists. I am not convinced that it is absolutely necessary that 500 of the rail cars of this country be tied up in Sydney almost as a habit, according to the Minister of Transport yesterday.

I am convinced that good planning, good dispatching and good organization by the CNR could move these cars, and that someplace, where there is now a shortage some of those 500 cars could be made available to the people who require transportation for various items of commerce within this nation. This puts the onus fairly and squarely on the government in general, and the Minister of Transport in particular. We can cite instances in agriculture where the turn around time for cars on a 450 mile haul is approximately 17 days. There is no excuse for any such delay. These cars are often loaded within a day. They can reach that 450 mile distance in 24 to 36 hours with proper dispatching. They can be unloaded, if placed properly, within a day, and they could conceivably be back for reloading quite comfortably within a week. If we consider the demurrage that an individual would be charged if he held that car for 10 to 11 days on his own siding, what must it cost the railroads to absorb the cost of idle equipment in this country by virtue of poor dispatching?

These are items to which I think in times of car shortages from the Okanagan to the Annapolis and from Newfoundland to Victoria, the minister should give his full attention. He should not be making excuses for them, he should not say that they are the result of habit. He should say that they are items to which he will give his immediate attention, and will try to resolve them forthwith. This is a serious matter. I was amazed at the fact that the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) could speak on this subject last night and not mention the problems connected with the transportation of agricultural products which exists in his constituency. In my opinion it was a gross oversight on his part. The transportation problem, both in respect of the time of delivery and the cost, of as well as the other ancillary charges which the railroads add to the transportation bill, has deprived that area of his constituency and a comparable area of mine of hundreds of thousands of dollars on an annual basis.

When one tries to discuss these items with the railway authorities, one receives no logical answer. Why does the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria not join me in putting pressure on the government to resolve these problems? This is the co-operation that is required in the interest of Canada, of his constituency and mine. This is a dire need for a portion of his constituency and mine, but it was not mentioned at all in his remarks last night.

I stated that it would seem as if the abandonment of the passenger service was almost intentional in view of poor connections and poor service. I am wondering if the dispatching complications which have arisen, and which require more turnaround time than would have been

[Mr. McCain.]

required 10, 15 or 20 years ago, are also intentional? Is there no solution to this? It certainly contributes to the car shortage problem for all commodities in Canada. Mr. Speaker, there is some proper criticism due to me in as much as I am being somewhat repetitive. If you look back you will see that I made somewhat comparable remarks, as reported in *Hansard*, at an earlier date during this session. But I think the remarks made by the various members of parliament, whether they come from P.E.I., Newfoundland, or from Crowfoot, should impress upon the government that the problem is of major consequence, and of particular consequence to my constituency, an agricultural one, which will only get competitive transportation if, as and when the railroads adopt an efficient and competitive pose toward that industry and its requirements.

● (1510)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention one other thing, which I am sure I mentioned previously, and on which I hoped I would have had an answer. It is a matter I certainly intend to press. As the CNR took over various facets of bankrupt railway companies, what became of the land grants made to those companies? Were they returned to the Crown? Are they assets of the CNR? To the best of my knowledge they are not. The CNR took over defunct railway lines with all their equipment and all their indebtedness.

Contrast that with the CPR. The CPR retained its lands, and presumably continued to manage them at a profit. But to the best of my knowledge—again I had hoped to have had an answer to this in reply to an earlier question—the total real estate holdings which the CPR received as an incentive to build its railway line are now retained in an independent holding outside the transportation field, and the benefit from these lands does not accrue to the transportation benefit of the people of Canada. That was not the intention when those lands were granted to the CPR. The lands were given to provide assets and revenues that, in the long run, would make the railway a viable operation. They have now been transferred to another account. Again I ask if this is correct? In my opinion something should be done about it.

We have a system in Canada of combination rates, Mr. Speaker. If you want to ship a carload of apples from a point in British Columbia by CNR to a non-competitive point in some other part of Canada, or a carload of apples by the CPR to a non-competitive point some distance from the Annapolis Valley, or a carload of potatoes from New Brunswick or P.E.I. to a non-competitive point, the railways will give you a specific rate. In effect they say, "Because this is a non-competitive point we will really collect from you." As a result, you may well pay 15 cents or 20 cents per hundredweight more to send goods to a non-competitive destination than you would pay to send them to a much more distant destination which is competitive. The Transport Commission is exercising no authority with respect to rates. The results of any investigation do not seem to be made available to the public, and this is to the detriment of the country.

If members opposite want to do something about the cost of living, then it is incumbent upon the government to take a look at some of the methods used by transportation systems, particularly the railways of this country, in