

Canadian National Railways

experiencing in connection with transportation. The government should do something about it.

Mr. Baldwin: I intend to make a few observations to back up what my hon. friend from Newfoundland has had to say, but before I do so I want to put a proposition before the committee, if this committee is capable of being propositioned. It may well be that before six o'clock arrives we can dispose of the resolution and then, by agreement if necessary, dispose of second reading and get into committee in order that the hon. member who has just spoken, and others, may be able to ask questions on the individual clauses. I am putting this forward as a suggestion. Possibly hon. members might give it some thought.

I support in every respect what hon. members from the province of Newfoundland have said. I come from a country where the railroads have been essential. It is through the construction of the railroads that the breath of life was injected into a new land. The tapestry of our country was brought together by the threads of the narrow bands of steel which came from Edmonton into the north. But within the last year and a half an application had been made to close the rail passenger service on about 500 miles of our system. So I appreciate the difficulties encountered by my hon. friends.

I might add that this service has not been operated by the C.N.R. alone; it is a joint operation between the C.N.R. and the C.P.R. They are lying down in the same bed, and I am sure the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre will think that it is not to the advantage of the C.N.R. to do so—that the C.N.R. will not rise as pure as it was before it lay down with the C.P.R.

I first went into my part of the country almost 40 years ago, and what hon. members from Newfoundland have said about the quality of the railway there reminds me of the experiences we had. I remember taking a trip almost 40 years ago—getting up after the train had left Edmonton and looking out from the back of the train. As I did so, I saw the track and the ties spring upward as they were released from the weight of the train. So much for the type of construction. I remember, too, that when the waters of the Lesser Slave lake were in flood they had to tie the track to the telegraph poles to prevent its floating away.

I remember the type of construction, the grades, the curves. There is an interesting

story told about those days. At one time members of the railway unions operating in the north were intent to secure positions on the railway going into Fort McMurray. Positions on this line were sought almost as eagerly as was the job of toll operator on the Jacques Cartier bridge some years ago. The reason was that the grades were of such a nature that approaching these curves in the wilderness it was possible for the engineer to get out, lay a trap line across the neck of the curves and meet the train coming out the other side. Then on the return journey the fireman would get off, pick up the pelts caught in the traps and rejoin the train. It meant a very lucrative job, so much so that some of the running trades did not need the pensions about which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has been talking.

• (5:00 p.m.)

I wish to support in every way I can the very reasonable, logical and impassioned pleas made by the hon. members from Newfoundland who, in an honest and impartial way, outlined the conditions which prevail in that province, and the great need to have the railway service sustained. If they speak as eloquently to the committee which will be examining both the estimates and the C.N.R. officials, I am sure and hope the government will give effect to their request that this service be maintained. I am sure I speak on behalf of all members in this party in assuring unanimous support to the Newfoundland members in their reasonable plea that this particular railway passenger service be sustained until a fair opportunity has been given for a try-out.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee have raised a number of very important matters linked with the transportation policy of the country. Coming from a part of Canada which is often considered somewhat remote I can understand the concern expressed by some members with respect to changes in operations of our railway system. Concern about such changes has been expressed in my area in the past. On a number of occasions I myself have expressed concern in this chamber about some of the freight rate policies of our railways.

I am glad to echo the words of the government house leader when he pointed out that further opportunities will be available to continue this discussion on the issues that have been raised in perhaps a more focussed and meaningful way, particularly the discussion