

be safely and efficiently operated, he may apply to the Commission for an order that the railway and its equipment, or both, shall be put in a safe and efficient condition. The Commission is authorized to make such an order. The order may direct what repairs, improvements or additions are to be made to the railways, equipment, or both, and stipulate time limits for commencement and completion.

Section 262(1)(c) embodies the standards which an efficient railway must meet. This particular section requires that a railway company shall, according to its powers, without delay, and with due care and diligence, receive, carry and deliver all traffic offered for carriage upon the railway.

Subsections 235(1) and (2) require that a railway company shall, according to its powers, afford to all persons and companies all reasonable and proper facilities for the receiving, forwarding and delivering of traffic. These requirements are mandatory. If a railway does not meet them, it is derelict in its duty and, therefore, not efficient.

Section 3 of the National Transportation Act embodies a policy statement. It declares that an efficient transportation system is essential to protect the interests of the users of transportation, and to maintain the economic wellbeing and growth of Canada. This section states in no uncertain terms that the efficiency of the national transportation system is to be judged by its efficiency in serving the private interests of users of the transportation system and in serving the general public interest, that is, both the private interests of the public and the public interest. The various private interests of the component parts of the transportation system are, obviously, not a factor upon which the efficiency of the system is to be judged.

We could go on. In his various statements made both inside and outside the House, the minister has clearly indicated that the railways are inefficient, that they are not interested in renovating their rolling stock, that the rails are deteriorating, what some of the bridges, even, are falling down. This is not a situation in which one can expect an effective passenger service to be provided. Certainly that, in itself, is an admission, a recognition of the fact that the railways are not functioning efficiently.

● (1540)

I could also refer to section 48 of the National Transportation Act, as well sections 50 and 51. These sections of policy, which is the National Transportation Act and the Railway Act, clearly and unequivocally define the powers of the minister. Evidently the minister has failed to exercise these powers in such a way as to compel the railways to discharge their mandate.

The minister also has the power of the purse, the power to grant money, such as the moneys provided by this particular bill. I suggest that funds could be earmarked for a specific purpose, such as to upgrade the road bed, to upgrade the availability of rolling stock, or to upgrade various pieces of equipment required.

Let me simply say to the minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, that in my opinion he has failed to discharge his responsibilities as Minister of Transport. He has failed to discharge his responsibilities to the people of Canada and to this parliament. I suggest that, rather than hide behind

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

the CTC and the National Transportation Act, he get on with the job of working with the CTC and the railways so that this country can start moving again.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, the CNR financing bill gives the House an opportunity to analyse the way the CNR is spending money. The way the CNR spends money is very important to the people of my riding. In my riding there is a huge railway centre in the city of Melville. I also represent a riding that produces a lot of grain and livestock, as well as potash. Therefore, the movement of these commodities is a very important part of our economy.

This afternoon I want to deal particularly with one or two matters of real concern to the people who work on the railway in my riding. I refer to rail safety, a matter the members of this House should really be concerned about, as well as the condition of the tracks that the men have to work on and the branch lines across the prairies.

Over the weekend an extremely unfortunate incident occurred in my riding. A young man who had just started work on the railways was killed when working on a train. He was a member of a crew the CNR were experimenting with, called a survey crew, in an effort to cut down on the number of men from four to three. As a result of this, and due to the track conditions at the time, this young man was the unfortunate victim in a dreadful accident, one that should be investigated by the minister, the CNR and the CTC. The train in question was backing in to hook up to some grain cars when it jumped the rails and caught this man between a railway car and a bin that held some fertilizer.

This incident has caused great concern among railroaders in my riding, as it will among those right across the country. They are concerned about the CNR's handling of matters such as safety, as well as the condition of rail tracks across this country. In my riding on Sunday I met some union officials employed by the CNR who told me that in the previous 30 hour period there were four derailments in the area serviced by the men working out of Melville, largely caused by the condition of the tracks.

I suggest that in examining the financing of the CNR, we should look at some of the problems experienced by the workers and at the dangers to which they are subjected. We all know winter conditions in the prairies, the large amount of snowfall this year, and we all know the condition of the tracks. At the same time, the CNR picks this period to conduct an experimental survey to cut down on the number of men in a crew. The railroaders in Melville and all across western Canada, I understand, are very concerned by this kind of action on the part of CNR officials and management.

I want to take this opportunity to ask the minister and CNR officials to investigate this accident to which I have referred. A person has died because of what appears to me to be negligence, to be a lack of concern about the safety of men and the conditions under which they have to work. The morale of CNR workers is hitting, in my opinion, a level that is probably lower than it has been for many a year. This is due to some of the matters I have already mentioned. When you combine this with the fact that we are now witnessing more difficulty in moving grain than