

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

● (10:10 p.m.)

Does he think that Members of Parliament are incapable of carrying out the task? Does he think that there perhaps is a conflict of interest? I suggest to him that the interest of the Canadian people is our business, and that that interest would best be served by having representatives of this House on bodies such as this board.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Ouellet (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I think that what was said by the hon. member has a lot of merit on many counts and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp), on February 20 last, had emphasized himself that there were a lot of good things in the suggestions which were made. However, he took that opportunity to raise a series of questions, at that time, about the role which should be played by a member of Parliament, should the government decide to appoint one to the Board of Governors and he mentioned what should be his responsibilities.

If I may, I should like to refer to the questions then raised by the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

I consider it my responsibility as a member of the government to raise certain fundamental questions and to express a view concerning the nature of the real relationship between Parliament and a government agency created by and, ultimately, answerable to Parliament. This question raises the subject of the responsibility and role of the minister and of the member of Parliament.

He said further and I quote:

The role of the member of Parliament on the Board of Governors is by no means clear and this uncertainty poses real difficulties for the MP himself, the Centre and the government. It has been suggested that the member of Parliament will be a channel of communication between the Centre and the Government and between the Centre and Parliament. Does this mean that the MP is, in fact, a full participant in the deliberations of the Board, sharing fully in its responsibilities while at the same time being the representative of Parliament responsible for informing Parliament on these activities? Is it to be left to his own judgment to decide what is confidential and what is not confidential?

This series of questions indicates clearly that the role must be clearly defined and that the government does not consider making such an appointment.

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[*English*]

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS—RETIRED EMPLOYEES' PENSIONS—ACTION TO IMPLEMENT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION FOR INCREASE

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, October 23, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 514, I put to the Minister of Transport the following question:

Is the minister yet in a position to report to the House on his discussions with the CNR concerning the increases in pensions by the Canadian National as recommended by a standing committee of this House and concurred in by the House itself?

[Mr. Stewart (Cochrane).]

The reply of the Minister of Transport was as follows:

No, Mr. Speaker. I am not at all certain whether it would be appropriate for me to report to the House regarding discussions between myself and officials of CNR. I can advise the hon. member that I have conveyed to the CNR officially the findings of the committee and the decision of the House. If there is anything subsequent to that which I can appropriately report I will, but I assume that this matter will emerge in the normal way through questioning before committees or in some other fashion.

There are few members of the cabinet for whom I have greater respect than I have for the Minister of Transport, but I say to him in all kindness that I do not think he can hide behind statements of that kind. The question of doing something about the pensions of retired employees of the CNR has been before Parliament for many years. In fact, it has been before us for decades. Some of us have seen to that. Finally, last spring, following the increases that were made in pensions of retired civil servants and in light of certain other developments, the government agreed to there being a study of this matter by the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. That committee went into the whole matter of CN pensions very thoroughly and came up with what I regard as a very useful and significant report.

That report was passed by the committee on Wednesday, September 9, 1970, and was presented to the House by the chairman of that committee on Monday, October 5, 1970. Two days later, on Wednesday, October 7, the House on a motion duly made and seconded concurred unanimously in that report. In other words, that report represents the will of the House of Commons in this matter. It is a lengthy document. There is not time enough for me to read it tonight, but I should like to draw to the attention of the House what I regard as an important element in it. In one place in the recommendations the committee draws attention to what Parliament has done by way of escalating pensions under the Canada Pension Plan, the Old Age Security Act, and so on. It also draws attention to the action of Parliament in increasing the pensions of retired civil servants, not only on a current basis but also retroactively. Then it says this at page 36:14:

The committee strongly recommends that these principles be adopted on a broader basis and that other major employers, including Crown corporations, recognize their obligation to follow the lead of Parliament in this regard. The committee specifically recommends that the Canadian National Railways implement these principles forthwith.

I cannot say that I completely agree with the campaign on which my hon. friend for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) is engaged, but I am giving him a piece of ammunition. Here we have Parliament expressing itself very clearly on an important issue, yet there seems to be nothing that Parliament can do except make a recommendation. We cannot say to Canadian National Railways, "This is what you shall do." Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the government, through the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) can come pretty close to this. The Minister of Transport could at least have a real heart-to-heart talk with the president of Canadian National Railways and find out why the Canadian National is not prepared to go along with this recommendation, if that is the case. I hope not.