

Canadian National Railways

railway pirates, namely the Canadian Pacific Railway. Because this is a publicly owned corporation, it is more responsible to Parliament and the people of Canada than a privately owned company. It is incumbent upon the management of the CNR to act in a better way than this. In fact, it is incumbent upon them to set an example for private employers in the transportation industry.

The cavalier attitude of the CNR toward Parliament needs to be dealt with by this government and by Parliament. I hope that members of all parties agree that this bill should not pass until such time as the government requires the CNR to implement the report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications with regard to CNR pensions. If the CNR refuses to do the right thing, Parliament will have to require them to do what is right or act on their behalf. It is not too late for Parliament to make fundamental changes in our transportation policies in order to give greater priority to public service and public needs and less priority to the financing and the needs of financiers.

When the CNR began operations on January 21, 1923 the company debt was over \$2 billion. Since that time, \$1.8 billion has been added to that debt. The Canadian public owns almost all of the shares of the company. I am interested in knowing who still holds the \$4 million of capital stock. Who are these stockholders and how long have they held these stocks? In which subsidiary companies are these stocks? I have been unable to acquire this information through my own resources, but I hope it will be given to the House. It will certainly be requested in the standing committee.

Another small item to which I wish to refer is typical of what has been allowed to happen to the finances of our railway system. There is over \$2 million worth of debt held by the public which is a perpetual debt with 5½ per cent interest. I thought that perpetual bonds went out in the days of Queen Victoria. Maybe that is when these bonds were issued, I do not know. If so, it is time to repeal these last vestiges of the Victorian age. I would like to know who holds these bonds. Where are they? Are they held in subsidiary companies of the CNR? Are they perpetual bonds of the old Grand Trunk Pacific, Grand Trunk Northern, Canadian Northern Railways or Canadian Government Railways? The amount involved is only \$2 million, but perpetuity is a long time. To receive 5½ per cent interest forever is pretty good, if you can live that long. I doubt whether they are held by individuals. If so, they will be unable to collect in perpetuity.

If these bonds are in the hands of some institution, I do not think it will be driven into bankruptcy or made a social welfare case if Parliament enacts legislation wiping these bonds off the books. If they were issued 50 or 75 years ago, we should determine the total amount of interest paid. If it amounts to more than the principal, that is a pretty fair return on the investment and the bonds should be recalled. These are some of the questions I would like answered. I hope we get the answers either in this chamber or in the standing committee.

I recommend to all hon. members a Dominion Bureau of Statistics document issued in September, 1970, cata-

[Mr. Benjamin.]

logue No. 52201. It is entitled, "Canadian National Railways 1923 to 1969". I commend this booklet to all hon. members. Because of my ignorance of accounting procedures and terminology, I spent a week end trying to understand it. I may have misread or misunderstood some of this. If so, I hope someone will straighten me out. I hope all members have a copy of this booklet when the annual report of the management of the CNR is presented next spring. We need to get the message through to the management of the CNR that all members of this House want to be very helpful with regard to the company's financial obligations and liabilities. I am sincere in saying that. It is time the management of the CNR told us what they think should be done about the company's financial position. We could use this information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. The hon. member can only continue with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Benjamin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the debate on the annual awards to the CNR, I ask hon. members on both sides of the House to give the matter of the CNR financing the closest possible scrutiny. It will be helpful to the committee when dealing with this bill and when dealing with the CNR annual report. It will also be very helpful to the CNR. Much more information is required, even more than is contained in this very thorough document. I hope the management of the CNR will be anxious and willing to supply us with the information which we request. With regard to that matter and to the matter of CNR pensions, on which the committee report was unanimously adopted, I hope that all members will attempt to get the message through to the CNR and the government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo.

Mr. W. M. Howe (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): It appears that even the Deputy Speaker is not able to get the name of my riding correct. It is Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo. I must ensure that the right names are used.

We are happy to note that today the government brought in its much heralded white paper on income security for Canadians. We certainly hope that vehicle is going to be carried forward and that the unanimous and detailed report presented by the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications with regard to the needs of retired Canadian National Railway employees was given every consideration during the preparation of the white paper. Although I have never been employed by a railroad, I did for many years live in a town where railroading was a way of life. Many employees of Canadian National who worked during the depression years are now pensioners, and they are having a very