

Canadian National Railways

where the CNR are concerned. They could probably look to us in the same way because their financing has been long delayed.

• (8:50 p.m.)

The cost of operating Canadian National Railways has always been influenced by its freight and transportation structure. I recall that last year Parliament financed the payment of interest of \$40 million due on the original purchase price of the railway. Although Canadian National Railways can legitimately look to Parliament to do something about getting its house in order, I suggest that the money that has been paid CN should be transferred to the national debt account rather than remaining a liability in the financial structure of the railway.

I am sure that as Your Honour listens to the speeches made by many members you ask yourself why we are paying \$40 million in interest. A few weeks ago all the members from northern Ontario stood up in the House and asked the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) to give consideration to hearing representations from people in the communities of northern Ontario whose rail service was going to be curtailed. The minister said that this was a good idea and that he would consider the matter; but a couple of days later he had to come back to the House and tell us that he was sorry, it could not be done because he really did not have authority to do it. Nevertheless, he said, he had been assured by the CTC that they would consider the matter.

Since we are paying this kind of money, Mr. Speaker, is it not time that we had control of this transportation facility? I have said many times that really we do not own it, it is not nationalized. We are now debating the debt structure of CN, a matter that the government has reluctantly but finally decided to examine. If the government does not, then I am sure the bill will not pass Parliament; that one day Canadian National will be left with the burden of a \$40 million debt, they will not be able to operate their lousy railway and Canadians may find they can get along without it—which is what people in many areas are doing now.

Since I have been a Member of Parliament I have travelled from North Bay to Ottawa on trains Nos. 7 and 8 which were recently withdrawn. These trains came into northern Ontario with a sleeper and went as far as Swastika, where they picked up passengers from Noranda and northern Quebec. Then they serviced the Timmins area, Cochrane and Hearst. At that point they picked up a sleeper of Ontario Northland and then went on to Montreal.

These trains 7 and 8 offered good accommodation and were well patronized. But then CN began charging Ontario Northland too much money to haul its sleeper and the railway considered that it was not worth while. Whatever the reason, they decided the proposition was too expensive. As a result you had to sit up travelling across northern Quebec and northern Ontario until you got to North Bay. You arrived there at around one or two in the morning, depending on weather, and then you could board the sleeper which would get you to Ottawa

[Mr. Peters.]

about seven o'clock in the morning, in time for you to shave and even have breakfast.

I remember when there were meals available on the train. Then they only offered lunches and finally there were no meals available and no beds. They almost got to the point of having no seats. The train consisted of coaches that came out of the ark. I remember saying at the time that the train would soon be withdrawn because it would not pay. The train had nothing to offer; there was no accommodation to sell.

Many of the communities of northern Ontario were built along the railway and depend upon it for their very existence. The Minister of Tourism and Information of the province of Ontario, hon. James Auld, had this to say in regard to the dropping of these two trains:

In our northwestern Ontario administrative district there are a total of 56 establishments located along the line. Six of these are primarily dependent on CNR rail service.

In northeastern Ontario, there are 208 establishments along the line. Eighteen of these are heavily dependent on rail service.

If the rail service is reduced or discontinued, the majority of these 24 establishments which depend on the trains for transportation of guests and supplies will find it very difficult to survive.

Some of the establishments which are adjacent to the line but are less dependent on the rail services may also find their businesses damaged. These tourist camps are more fortunate in that they have other means of access with most of their clientele arriving by road or air.

My field staff has also noted that cottagers and tourists use these rail services for transportation to and from Parry Sound and Toronto.

The department is making the strongest recommendation that the CNR must recognize and fulfil its responsibilities to the tourist establishments and communities along the rail line.

I suggest that will get the minister nowhere, Mr. Speaker. If rail service is gradually withdrawn, then the number of passengers using the service will decrease by about the same percentage. It is Parkinson's law in reverse. I presume that if you do not offer the accommodation you will not get the passengers. Certainly that is true of transportation. I suggest there are very few people who do a lot of travelling who would not think twice about travelling by train if the accommodation were adequate and they were able to reach their destination at a reasonable hour. They would prefer this to travelling by automobile or aircraft.

This afternoon one hon. member told the House about getting on a train to go to Montreal and not being told that the line had been closed as a result of an accident further up the line. What does the railway care what the passengers think? The railway get their money just the same—provided the passengers do not walk, of course. If they do decide to walk and have paid for their ticket, then there is no station at which they can reclaim their money anyway. The railways could not care less. But surely some Members of Parliament care. They know that rail transportation can be provided in many areas much more economically than building additional highways.

In northern Ontario the roads are crowded with transports towing a trailer, and in some cases two trailers,