

Rail Transport

This is where we find ourselves today. We have arrived at a point in Canadian parliamentary history where somebody will have to take a close look at whether there is a need to continue the CTC, with its present attitude. Someone will have to take a close look at where the responsibility for transportation matters lies.

I could tell stories for hours about all the problems we have encountered in our own little province in our efforts to work out solutions with this multiheaded animal, the Canadian Transport Commission. It is impossible to reach either the Minister of Transport or the CTC. There were two occasions when I served several small communities, in fact seven small islands off the main coast of Newfoundland. The CTC have the responsibility of providing some kind of transportation link between the islands and the mainland. This is contained in the Terms of Union which were signed back in 1949. A small boat operated between the Change Islands and the mainland. On one occasion they wanted some kind of landing facility so that when the boat went in to dock, there would be a small structure for unloading the one car which the ferry boat could take on a calm day; they wanted a small plank on which they could drive the car. The wharf is owned by an old friend of Jack Pickersgill.

This private wharf may be worth about \$1,000. There is a private arrangement whereby the owner gets \$1,000 a year to rent this wharf to the CTC. It is a neat little arrangement which Mr. Pickersgill made when he represented my riding. The people who use the ferry wanted this little plank on platform built which would cost a few hundred dollars. The government said it was the responsibility of the CTC, and the CTC said it was the responsibility of the Department of Public Works or the Department of Transport. Right now there are 700 people being served by the ferry which has to wait for the water to rise or fall to land the one car which it carries. This is hard to believe.

On another occasion I was looking after the case of a similar operation serving 600 or 700 people on another island, actively employed, hardworking people none of whom were on welfare. Their wharf had deteriorated. Again it is a privately-owned wharf, rented to the CTC through the auspices of Jack Pickersgill. The wharf was in such need of repair that the ferry could not carry any trucks or cars. Normally the ferry can carry two cars or one truck loaded with freight or goods for the community. The island had to go for two months without produce. All that was required was a couple of thousand dollars to repair this private wharf by agreement with the CTC. We worked on this problem during the whole summer. I threatened to raise the matter in the House of Commons if we could not get some guarantee from the CTC that they would make the necessary changes. If they were not going to make them, I was going to challenge their decision on legal grounds or on a constitutional basis.

Those are two small examples of circumstances that do not affect the nation as a whole but are indicative of the thousands of transportation problems that are being swept under the carpet because of the inactivity of the CTC. I do not wish to point the finger at all the members of the CTC. I have dealt with some whose names are unsung but who are determined, honourable and distinguished servants of Canada. They are anxious to help solve some problems,

[Mr. Lundrigan.]

but they are being strangled by the political head which is at the top of the organization or by some direction from the government which does not permit them to make the right kind of decisions.

The simple fact of the matter is that under its present terms of reference the CTC can take no action in transportation except to eliminate services. There is a tremendous amount of indecision in the whole area of transportation. If I were a minister of the Crown responsible for transportation, I would look seriously at the need to restructure the CTC, to eliminate it or to give it new terms of reference and public responsibility. As a member of parliament and as a Canadian, I should like to make sure that the Minister of Transport is accountable for transportation problems in our country. I believe the hon. member who will follow me will take the same attitude.

We have certainly arrived at a situation where somebody must face the reality that exists in transportation. I do not want to criticize individual members of the commission, but there is something wrong in Canada when there is a continuous presentation of motions from individual members—and, God knows, western members have been active almost every day in trying to deal with transportation difficulties. Last week 74 of us members of parliament visited British Columbia. Almost incessantly the argument was thrown at us that the people over there are concerned about lack of direction in transportation. Briefs were presented to us and we heard arguments from all across the province regarding stagnation of the economy due to the downfall of the transportation system.

Without making any generalized comment which might be challenged by the hon. member for St. Boniface and of which he would like to accuse me, let me say that the quality of transportation is declining. Japan has come up with the monorail system which has revolutionized their transportation system. Great Britain, with its dense population and its difficulties in building good transportation systems, has been able to provide a transportation system which would put us to shame. Putting partisan politics aside, one wonders where we are going in Canada. There seems to be nobody with over-all responsibility for transportation. That is why I say it is time for us as members of parliament to introduce motions and bring forward recommendations to re-examine the role of the CTC. It is nothing but a buffer for the government and a body which enables the government to make unpopular decisions, a body which can take the blame and responsibility for them.

● (1750)

Mr. Paul E. McRae (Fort Williams): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the motion proposed by the hon. member for Perth-Wilmot (Mr. Jarvis) which asks that rail passenger service be reinstated in areas of southwestern Ontario from which it was removed during the past few years. However, before doing so I would like to speak on a point of personal privilege in reply to the earlier remarks of the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan). No departmental officer, or anyone else for that matter, is ever going to put words into my mouth when it comes to speaking about railroad affairs. I come from a great community which is totally dependent on the railroad. I spent 30, 40 or 50 hours with railroaders during the last strike,