

National Transportation Policy

minister, I think quite properly, made it clear that there was no sort of relationship, though they were friends, between the chairman of the transport commission and himself. I am prepared to accept the assurance of the minister that his position is clear and that he does not interfere in decisions, but like many other people both inside and outside Parliament I cannot say that I have the same confidence in the chairman of the Canadian Transport Commission as I have in the minister.

Before we set up the Canadian Transport Commission we had the board of transport commissioners. As I read their decisions I began to think they were wasting money on rent to stay in Ottawa, that they ought to have their offices on the premises of the Canadian Pacific Railway, because I never knew them to make a decision that was against the interests of the CPR. But I do want to say that the board of transport commissioners was a great organization compared to the Canadian Transport Commission under its chairman, Mr. Pickersgill.

I should like to give some illustrations of the kind of decisions that are made by the commission under its chairman. Since the Canadian Transport Commission took over its responsibilities under this minister, it has been the policy to downgrade Air Canada and to build up the regional air carriers. I have been interested to watch the regional air carriers who have been able to get their share of the gravy. I come from Winnipeg, and although I am speaking somewhat parochially I cannot say that I am unhappy at the growth of Transair. But I would be less than honest if I were to say that I believe it is a coincidence that Transair's operations have grown so rapidly since the advent of the Canadian Transport Commission, under the chairmanship of Mr. Pickersgill, knowing that the president of Transair, Mr. Rod McIsaac, was formerly—and may still be—the chief fund-raiser of the Liberal party in Manitoba and that the vice-president of Transair, Mr. Morrison, was formerly the executive assistant of Mr. Pickersgill when he was minister of transport.

• (2120)

I do not believe that was sheer coincidence; nor do I believe it was sheer coincidence which permitted Transair to order large, expensive Boeing-737 airliners when its operation at that time did not warrant the purchase of these aircraft. Of course, Transair had an application in for longer runs from Winnipeg to Regina to Saskatoon, and from Winnipeg to the Lakehead to Dryden to Sault Ste. Marie and Toronto, and a jet run from Winnipeg to the Lakehead to Toronto. It required a great deal of confidence to buy those aircraft before the CTC had heard the applications and made a decision. I do not believe this was a coincidence; they must have had some foresight.

Let us look at what happens in the case of that great Canadian company which has only one purpose, serving the needs of the Canadian people—the Bell Telephone Company. I cannot remember a time when the Bell Telephone Company made an application for an increase in rates and the Canadian Transport Commission said no. It is true that Bell Telephone does not get everything it asks for, but I have had a good deal more experience with unions than with corporations and it seems that Bell Telephone, when it asks for rate increases, operates in much

[Mr. Orlikow.]

the same way as most of the unions. It asks for two or two-and-a-half times as much as it expects to get, and hopes to settle for a pretty good increase. That is precisely what Bell Telephone has done every year even though its profit has been substantial and has increased every year. Each year Bell Telephone asks at least once for an increase, and at least once a year it has received an increase as a result of the kindness and impartiality of the chairman of the Canadian Transport Commission.

Mr. Deachman: So why don't you buy a block of stock and get rich?

Mr. Orlikow: The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman) suggests I should buy a block of stock and get rich. If I had his money I probably would do that.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Orlikow: Let us look at what has happened to passenger services since the Canadian Transport Commission has taken over the supposed supervision of railway services. Passenger services have been cut in virtually every part of the country. It is true that the commission has not yet agreed to all the requests of the CPR, but if it did there would be no passenger service provided by the CPR. I suppose we should thank God for small mercies.

I have already referred to the most glaring example of the cut in services that has taken place, namely the service between Ottawa and Montreal. The same thing is happening on a lesser scale in every part of the country. The members of the transport committee have just come back from hearings in southern Ontario about reduction in service in that part of the country. We have a reduction in the number of trains and dining and sleeping cars have been taken off, all of which was permitted by the CTC. Of course, the railway companies will come to the CTC and say they want to discontinue these passenger services because they have no passengers. Of course they have no passengers: they have done everything they can to drive them away.

The situation in respect of rail passenger service is duplicated in respect of rail freight service. Members from Atlantic Canada, the most disadvantaged area of this country, have spoken again and again over the years, as they did again today, about the inexorable increases in rates for freight moving across the Atlantic provinces. This results in a reduction in the standard of living in these areas because of a reduction in services, in employment and in the ability of the Atlantic provinces to compete for jobs and the production of goods, because the movement of raw materials required for manufacturing and the moving of the finished product costs more. Therefore they become less competitive than they have been up to now.

That is the record of the Canadian Transport Commission, that body established by a Liberal government to help us develop a national transportation policy. One thing we ought to have learned—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret I must advise the hon. member that his time has expired.