

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

the trans-continental, in which case, where would the traffic come from?

● (1540)

Instead of concentrating on their proper business, such as supplying cars and locomotive power, officials of the company go about making speeches. They say the Crownsnest Pass Agreement is what is tying them up. How ridiculous! When we look at the figures, we find that despite the terms of the Crownsnest Pass Agreement the years in which most grain was moved were the years in which the CN either made higher profits or incurred smaller losses. Instead of financing hotels, maybe the CN should write off some of the old debts they have been complaining about. I would be far more responsive if the company came up with a proposal for writing off these old debts which burden the balance sheet with interest charges. This would appeal to me more than the idea of voting money which will not produce anything, really, except for one element they think is essential to their own self-elevation, namely, prestige. They like to say: We have bought hotels; we are a big company controlling all kinds of enterprises; we have built a tower—where else in the world can you find a tower like that, and where else in the world do you find such posh hotels?

Just think of the money which is going to be spent on such items as the silly ashtrays in these places. We could spend less and get some of those box cars out of the smaller communities; it would not take much money to move that snow off the tracks. The company is no longer concentrating on its original purpose, and that is what disturbs me. I have before me a brief from the farmers' union including a long list of cars which have been left on sidings for a month at a time. Nobody in management seems to know how to get those cars out, how to move the grain to the west coast.

How much money is involved in all this? I have seen figures estimating the loss to Canada at between \$500 million and \$700 million. But take the lower figure. It is \$500 million that this country could earn, and it is \$500 million that these hotels will never earn. The opportunity to earn this money may not come back again. Observe the way in which prices are fluctuating. Take the price of rapeseed. Buyers can no longer place any faith in Canadian deliveries. The transportation system cannot deliver, and if you cannot deliver you cannot sell. The price of rapeseed dropped \$2 a bushel last month, and that in itself is bound to affect the Canadian economy.

Why have all these difficulties arisen? It is because one minister after another has been content to pass the buck. I do not know when this Minister of Transport intends to resign, but he had better make up his mind quickly because if he sits around for another six months before resigning we shall have lost another six months. I do not care whether we are trying to move lumber, grain, minerals or anything else. It has to be delivered. Ships will not continue to wait indefinitely in Canadian ports. Why should they? The world is wide, and the world is not idle. There are people who want to work and who are able to produce; they have products to sell, and pretty soon we may find ourselves sitting on a lot of commodities we do not know what to do with. We shall be wondering what hit us, wondering how we shall cope with inflation and the

[Mr. Korchinski.]

other problems which face us. Maybe we shall try to persuade ourselves that because Canada is such a big country everything will work itself out. I do not believe it. I think we should face up to the difficulties we are discussing this afternoon and, for once, deny some of these grandiose ideas in the hope that the people concerned will decide to concentrate on the matter in hand. I am not convinced they will ever concentrate if we keep giving them money.

The other day, someone on the CRTC said the CBC could get along with less advertising. That will mean more money to be raised from taxes. Apparently parliament is ever willing to put out this kind of money for entertainment, to make sure that viewers do not have to put up with a break in the movie because a commercial is being shown for a few seconds. Why, then, should we need to worry about money around here, some may ask. I maintain we should put our money into areas which will ensure efficient transportation in order that the whole country may benefit. We should insist that management moves in the direction the country wishes it to take. There is no reason why all these people should have to bug me about boxcars, or why I should have to bug the minister. It cannot be pleasant for the minister. Do you think it is pleasant for him to have to listen to these complaints all the time, Mr. Speaker? It is not. Management finds it very convenient to tell the country: Never mind, it will all work itself out. But will it? It will not, if parliament allows the situation to develop as it has been developing.

I am suggesting to you, Mr. Speaker, that for once we should deny this vote of money to management if only that they might be encouraged to get back to the original intent of parliament, which was to provide transportation in this country, not to inflate their egos.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, in rising today to speak on the amendment put forward by my hon. friend, the hon. member for Mississauga (Mr. Blenkarn) in respect of the Canadian National financing bill, I should like to submit to you some of the concerns which relate specifically to my own riding. For a long time now many Canadians have been concerned about the real priorities of the Canadian National Railways and whether those priorities, so far as they relate to the movement of passengers and goods across Canada, can be reconciled with what appear to be the priorities that CN has embarked upon. The public believe the priorities that CN appear to be establishing for itself are not the priorities they thought CN originally had or that they should have today.

● (1550)

For some weeks now we have been viewing on our national television network episodes of "The National Dream", depicting the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It is a re-enactment of the opening up of the west, a period that had tremendous impact not only on the people of that day but on Canadians of subsequent generations. There was a dream, a purpose, involved. It caught on—indeed, it caught on in many countries of the world—and it is still a very vital part of the dream that I would say Canadians have today. However, the operation of our