

*Canadian National Railways and Air Canada*

who would like to work in the direction of improving the situation in that regard.

I also urge the minister to use his power with the CNR for the benefit of the workers. The workers are not slaves any more and deserve more than the paltry wages which I have mentioned. Also, pensioners ought to be treated better. As a publicly-owned transportation system, the CNR ought to set a pattern in this field which would be the envy of the so-called free enterprise system. I urge the minister to act in the three areas I have mentioned.

**Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is safe to assume that members of this House wiser than I am might have been content, in contributing to this debate, to say, "I agree with what was said this afternoon by the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher)." He represents a neighbouring riding, and I do not think the case with respect to rail passenger service in southwestern Ontario has been more effectively or forcibly put by anyone than it was by that hon. member this afternoon.

I am not indulging in wishful thinking when I say to the minister that in the part of the world which I represent, rail passenger service is not a partisan issue. It is not only Conservatives who ride the rails. Passengers include those who support the NDP and the Liberal Party. I think it is safe to say that the members of all parties representing that part of Ontario have spoken with one voice.

When I came to this House in January, I do not think I was so naïve, as a new member, as to think that the major problems of my constituency would be solved immediately. I confess I was naïve enough to think that I would be given the opportunity to discuss these problems in the House. I must confess, further, that I and many other members were disappointed in this regard. I therefore hope to find some sympathy in this House for my feeling of frustration. That frustration was spoken of so well this afternoon by the hon. member for Bruce, as we have been given little or no opportunity to discuss rail transportation in this House since last January. Those of us who are concerned about this important issue have been allotted a minimal amount of time in the standing committee, and in the daily question period to raise this issue. In the question period the answers or, more accurately, non-answers of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) have only added to our dilemma.

The hon. member for Bruce spoke of his feelings of frustration and hopelessness. I hope I do not sound as pessimistic as he did. Perhaps his pessimism was induced by the fact that he has been here longer than I have and knows the minister better than I do. The frustration I voice is also the reflection of the feelings of three pertinent groups in my area. These are, first, the rail passengers; at least, those who were at one time rail passengers and would like to become once more rail passengers. The second group consists of the employees of the railways, and the third group for whom little is said is the property owners' group through whose property railway rights-of-way run. This group includes other occupants of such property.

If I may speak about the first group, the railway passengers, let me point out that the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications was

tabled in this House on June 21, 1972. It was a unanimous report. I attended meetings in Stratford. There were other meetings all over western Ontario. I remember very well that those who presented briefs or gave evidence usually prefaced their remarks by saying, "We do not think you can do much, but . . . On several occasions they were interrupted by the chairman or acting chairman as the case may be, who said, "We know what you have gone through. You have had meetings with the railways; they have shown a great deal of sympathy and have protested that they will make every effort to improve the situation, but then they have forgotten about you."

These people had met with the Canadian Transport Commission and again had been shown the same sympathy. They had been given excellent hearings, but then they had been forgotten. So when the members of this House making up that committee came to Stratford and called witnesses, the almost invariable response was, "We don't know why we are here, because we have gone through all this before." The committee members said, honourably and sincerely, "You are wrong. We are present to hear you and this is one time when something will be done." I see members of this House present tonight who sat on that committee. I know they are honourable men who meant what they said.

The committee's report was unanimous. It was published as a result of public hearings in western Ontario which had been called for the purpose of eliciting representations on the adequacy or inadequacy of passenger service in that area. It received 55 briefs and heard 68 witnesses. The committee was presented with petitions, letters and mail-in coupons containing several thousand names asking for restoration or continuance of rail passenger service in the southwestern Ontario region.

Despite those these hearings the CTC discontinued rail passenger service in the area effective November 1. At the time of discontinuance the Canadian Transport Commission assumed, and the residents of the area were so informed, that public transportation in forms other than rail would be provided. After about two years, the evidence presented to the committee indicated that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the type of passenger service then provided.

The bus service provided in the area did not constitute a satisfactory alternate public transportation service, nor did any other system of transportation solve the transportation problems of the public. The committee therefore recommended, among other things, first that all rail passenger services which were discontinued on November 1, 1970, should be re-established immediately and, second, that a moratorium should be placed on all pending passenger train discontinuance applications in Canada. The committee also recommended—and this recommendation was as important as the other two—that a joint study group composed of representatives of federal, provincial and municipal officials should be formed. In other words, it recommended that a trilevel study be established immediately, all of which was well put this afternoon by the hon. member for Bruce. This study was to determine a minimum rail passenger network as defined in relationship to the most efficient and adequate transportation system