

*Railway Act*

leaders of the various parties represented in the House, I should like first of all to assure Your Honour and my colleagues that we will respect this agreement and that I shall limit my remarks to the strict minimum.

With regard to the comments of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) broadcast last night with regard to the present disturbing economic situation in Canada, and more particularly in the province of Quebec, which situation will continue to worsen through 1975, we better understand the purpose the government wishes to achieve through Bill C-48.

Still, it is time authority should manifest itself in Canada that the people might be reassured and that order might reign in our country, that the monetary capital might serve the human capital and that those two forms of capital might work together towards the economic development of our country.

Madam Speaker, I often regretted that in our country we have governments that are strong in front of the weak, governments that do not hesitate to smother the weak with taxes of all kinds, that force the little people to respect law and order. On the other hand, we have seen weak governments in front of the strong, governments that in turn are defeated by the big and powerful.

It is high time that taxpayers be in a position to know what it costs in such and such a sector to ensure essential services to the public and that without waste.

I also understood that Bill C-48 is an instrument, a very valuable tool, providing we are willing to use it, put into the hands of a minister, a cabinet, so that the large companies, in this context, the railway companies, respect our country's laws and give accounts.

● (2240)

Year after year, Parliament votes credits to subsidize this transportation system which often operates at a loss without submitting a detailed account of its administration to Parliament. Are the taxpayers' dollars used to the best advantage of all? That is what I have asked myself. Are Canadians receiving reasonable transportation services for their tax dollar?

Now, the purpose of Bill C-48 was to disclose the profits and expenditures of the CNR for the whole country, and not only for one part, be it Eastern or Western Canada. Formerly, Madam Chairman, expenditures and revenues were not disclosed to the public. This bill will make the rendering of accounts and the disclosure of expenses and revenues to the public in general mandatory, so that they may have a clear view of this situation and that they might receive proportional return for their contribution to the maintenance of these public services.

The provinces rightly requested information from the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) and the federal cabinet, through the Canadian Transport Commission. The CTC, with all respect due the commissioners, has not always clearly met the taxpayers' demands. We have here another high-minded commission flying way above the people's representatives and ministers, not giving a heck about anybody, making decisions as they see fit without answering to Parliament for their administration. I hope under this bill we will at least have reports and see

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

exactly what goes on in the field of transportation. As the Minister of Transport aptly said, clause 331.1 only requires companies to give what the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) already mentioned at a western provinces' conference. If through an act of Parliament the wish expressed by the Prime Minister of our country is translated into action, we will be in a position to say one conference at least gave results and the Canadian taxpayers can be proud of it.

Public information on railway costs has long been overdue, whether from CN or CP. We are entitled to know exactly what we pay for. Whether the cost is too high or too low is for the taxpayer to tell, when the figures are published.

Clause 331.2 provides the minister may require and publish cost information. I support this. For once we perceive the government has the strength and courage to require public information from these big corporations. For this reason, I wholeheartedly support Bill C-48 introduced by the government, and feel convinced my colleagues will surely follow suit when they have had an opportunity to get more detailed knowledge of it.

In section 331.3, according to what the minister said a while ago, we are advised that it will not be possible to publish cost information until it is released to all the Ministers of Transport, both federal and provincial. But it is quite normal that the companies operating under national or provincial legislations should report to the government, to the minister responsible for their respective operations, before having their reports made public, so that the minister may check the information, and get to the bottom of things, as the President of France, the great General de Gaulle, used to say. He has given the world a piece of advice we should never forget. We, as members of Parliament, should be inspired by it: to get to the bottom of things. We should closely check on whatever happens in any given area without acting silly. When we are asked to give information, we should be able to give it out.

I think that, under section 331, the minister will at least have the satisfaction of being able to get the required information and then to pass it on to the public. I think this is the way it should be. I know this is not the second reading debate and that it should not be a clause by clause discussion of the bill, but in this I take example after the Minister of Transport who just explained the fundamentals of this bill. He said its purpose was to make sure the demands of the minister would be obeyed by the railways; through this bill the minister will have the power to make investigations, call witnesses to clear up the issue. Madam Speaker, if there is a minister with enough courage to present such a bill and insist that all this transport issue be fully aired, then I will gladly and vigorously endorse such a bill, if for no other reason than to shed light on the subject.

Finally, whenever provinces request it, the minister wants to have information on the transportation costs in both western and eastern Canada, in order to compare railway costs to those for water, air, or land transportation.

God knows, Madam Speaker, how many discussions have taken place over the last few years over the issue of feed grain transportation from Western to Eastern