

ation on the matter of pensions, funding, advantages and benefits was put as follows:

● (1750)

The railway companies and the bargaining agents are all spreading the same propaganda about the new pension formula being a 2 per cent formula. Many of the statements made are misleading. Tens of thousands of railway employees will retire with railway pensions of 1.3 per cent for each year of service, not 2 per cent as many believe.

I am not for one minute saying that is accurate or inaccurate, because I do not know. But I do know that the contributions the companies are making to the pension plan, as opposed to the contributions being made by the workmen, represent a substantial disparity. This is also a matter of great concern. I think it is proper to bring to the attention of the minister the fact that evidently a press release has been put out today by the pension association. I am sure the minister is aware that there are over 20,000 such people in the country. The effect of the press release is that they want the terms of reference of the appointee the minister has referred to broadened so that his inquiry will include all aspects of the Canadian National, and I suppose they mean also the CP, pension fund.

So my question to the minister is, can he give us some assurance that this whole question will be gone into? If the minister does not want to go that far at this time, can he give us the assurance that he will meet as soon as possible, which means almost immediately—and I recognize the demands on his time at the moment—with representatives of this pension group so that immediate negotiations can take place with a view to setting up an inquiry to end once and for all this running sore; because the complaints the pensioners have are justified or they are not? It seems to me—and I think all hon. members will agree—that it is now time to advise these people that the problem will be independently considered and settled.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): In answer to the hon. member for Vancouver South, may I say that I indicated earlier today to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre that the very significant improvements that were made to the CPR and CNR pension plans were signed, sealed and delivered, so to speak, in March as a result of a lot of work that had been done. These were agreed to by all the leaders of the railway unions. This was a significant improvement going back to 1956.

What the pension association and some members of parliament, including the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Vancouver South, are asking is that we now take a further look at the benefits structure and the over-all plans to see whether they can be improved over and above the improvements agreed to in March. That is a quite legitimate suggestion.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): With reference, of course, to those already retired.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Yes, with reference to those already retired. I think this is quite a legitimate position, but I do not think it can be accomplished relative to the bill before us today. I think we would have to go into all sorts of questions. The parties should be consulted in that regard. There is the question of whether it could be

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done through a joint committee, something similar to what was done before with assistance from governmental officials, if you like, from my department and the Department of Transport.

If it should appear that is not the best method, then perhaps an industrial commissioner should look into the whole broad question. So, as I assured the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre I am now assuring the hon. member for Vancouver South that I would be prepared, as would the Minister of Transport, to bring the parties together to see what further significant changes can be made to improve these pensions.

If this can best be accomplished by an industrial commissioner, I have already indicated that I will consider that. At this stage, however, I do not think this should be confused with what is pertinent now, relative to the dispute before the House, that is, the whole question of costing. As a result of representations made to myself, particularly, by the unions, it seems they had considerable suspicion concerning the costing figures of the CPR and the CNR and asked that these be analysed quickly. If the assumptions of the actuaries, and so on, were accurate and the figures of the company were exaggerated, they wanted it all examined quickly, in the event that an arbitrator is appointed under this legislation, so that he could get the views of the industrial commissioner immediately. This might be very beneficial to the workers, because if they could establish that the figures of the railway companies were exaggerated, the arbitrator could take that into account and it might benefit the workers in respect of wages and other matters in dispute.

This could be pretty important. I can tell you it is very important in respect of the union leadership in this particular dispute. So if we, in a too hurried fashion, impose upon the industrial commissioner who was appointed yesterday, John Deutsch, other duties, we would be very concerned that not enough discussion had gone on and that this might delay his coming to a conclusion concerning the accuracy of the costing that has been arrived at by the CNR and the CPR and would delay the turning over of his findings to the arbitrator appointed under this legislation.

I think we must keep in mind that in the unhappy event, which now seems inevitable, that an arbitrator will be appointed under this legislation, it is important that he get his decision out quickly. If these men are to receive a further increment in wages and have other matters resolved, they do not want the same type of delay that has already occurred. That is the reason for not broadening the terms of reference of this particular industrial commissioner to include the subject about which the hon. member is talking.

I also indicated earlier that in respect of the costing analysis to be done by John Deutsch, I have received representations today as to how his terms of reference can be further improved. I hope to be able to give all hon. members further details on that particular matter later today.