

good will does not allow for exchange of views and inquiries such as this, what does it mean? What is its value?

• (2210)

I hope that we shall get some forthright replies. I hope that Moscow and Ottawa will not just proclaim closer contacts, but use them. The minister often tells us, sometimes self-righteously it seems to me, that we are dedicated to the pursuit of freedom and liberty for all. Here is a chance to do more than preach. Let us take up these matters seriously and seek a reply from the Soviet Union. If we demur from asking, our inflow of information will naturally be limited. In the absence of information we cannot begin to be helpful on the issue.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) did not hesitate to make gratuitous and reprehensible public comments about the United States when he was in Russia. Perhaps his government and its ministers will in this instance not hesitate to make use of our cordial diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union to pursue full and serious inquiries on the matter brought so forcefully and so sincerely to the minister's attention.

Mr. Gaston Isabelle (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the government fully sympathizes with the views expressed on this issue by many Canadians. However, given the precepts of international law regarding intervention in the internal affairs of another state, direct representations to the Soviet authorities or to any international body might only provoke a negative reaction from the Soviet authorities and could very easily bring about results opposite to those desired.

During his visit to the Soviet Union, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) nevertheless raised similar and related matters with Mr. Kosygin on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. During Mr. Kosygin's visit to Ottawa, these issues were raised again both by the Prime Minister and by the Committee on External Affairs and National Defence of this House. I am confident that the Soviet authorities are now fully aware of our position.

The persistent and quiet diplomatic means we have used in relation to these issues have produced some results. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) has stated in this House, the Canadian government has been more effective in reuniting Jewish families than any other government in the world. As far as the arrested Ukrainian intellectuals are concerned, it would seem appropriate under the circumstances to use such techniques as we have found successful on related matters.

Sensitive issues between states can be broached only in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and trust if negative reactions are to be avoided. The government believes that Canada has to a certain extent been successful in achieving such an atmosphere vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

[Translation]

And the government of Canada, Mr. Speaker, intends indeed to keep on using advanced methods, be they suggested by the private or public sector, to assist in the solution of problems such as those raised by the hon. member for Hillsborough.

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

[English]

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS—RETIRED EMPLOYEES' PENSIONS—REQUEST FOR ANNUAL ESCALATION AND CHANGE IN BASIS OF CALCULATION—REPRESENTATIONS BY MINISTER

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, February 29, as reported at page 360 of *Hansard*, I put this question to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson):

In view of mounting concern with respect to Canadian National pensions, including both the need for the pensions of those already retired to be escalated annually, and the need to calculate Canadian national pensions on the basis of a factor of 2 per cent per year of service, will the minister make renewed representations to the Canadian National concerning these two matters?

The reply of the minister was that he would be glad to do so, whereupon I asked him a supplementary question in connection with how he was getting along with the Canadian Pacific Railway in regard to pensions. I received no answer to that question so perhaps we will deal with the CPR on another occasion.

Then on Friday, March 10, as reported in *Hansard* at page 713, I put another question to the Minister of Transport in these terms:

In view of the fact that Air Canada is now computing the pensions of all its employees on the basis of 2 per cent for each year of service, will the minister ask Canadian National Railways when it will take similar action and raise the basis of its pension plan from 1½ per cent to 2 per cent?

The minister was good enough to reply that he would direct this question to the Canadian National and that he would pass the reply to me when it was received. There really is not much more I want to place before the House tonight by way of argument than the points set out in the questions I have read from the record. There is a great deal of feeling among Canadian National employees and pensioners concerning the pension situation. There are many improvements which they feel should be made, but the two main ones are those I suggested in my question of February 29, namely, the need to provide for the escalation of the pensions of those already retired to take place every year instead of just once, as has been the case thus far, and the need to put the basis for the calculating of Canadian National pensions on a 2 per cent factor, as is the case with so many other pension plans.

In my question of March 10 I made an allusion, which I think is terribly important in this whole situation, to the fact that Air Canada, which is owned by Canadian National Railways, does have a pension plan under which its employees get 2 per cent credit for each year of service. It does seem quite inconsistent, when Air Canada provides a 2 per cent factor, for the Canadian National, which as I say owns Air Canada, to provide only a 1½ per cent factor for the calculation of its pensions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I raise these two questions again tonight, an annual escalation and the establishing of a 2 per cent factor, because they are of intense concern to the people affected and because they feel, as I do, that it is time for action on both of these issues.

Mr. Ian Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond to the matter raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North