

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

Columbia to look at the situation on the ground, to talk with the people there and see what is involved.

Mr. Paproski: Send Chrétien.

Mr. Howard: If he sends the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) we would get a lot more action than we would out of the Minister of Transport. He may not be doing anything in the field of Indian affairs, but he could deal with this problem; he has lots of time on his hands.

I see the Minister of Transport leaving now. Is he going out to B.C.?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Yes, I am going to B.C.

Mr. Howard: Good. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, all we are asking the minister to do is to take some deliberate action, ministerial action if he likes, or Governor in Council action if that is what is involved, to appoint someone, whether from the Canadian Transport Commission or some other body, who is not connected with CN, the B.C. railroad or the provincial government, to look at the situation, see what is involved. This person should have the authority of a co-ordinator of boxcar movements to ensure that sufficient boxcars are available to move this lumber. Surely, there cannot have been such a lack of planning on the part of CN that the reason for the shortage of boxcars, as the CN has said on more than one occasions, is firstly demand, and secondly, the increase in the time needed to ship lumber to the U.S. and receive the empty cars back.

This was the point I was making initially. All the CN has to do under the inter-railway agreement on how much each railway charges the other for use of the cars on a per diem basis is to work out an accelerated per diem rate so that it is more costly to keep those cars in the United States to warehouse the lumber than it is to empty the cars and ship them back to Canada so we can use them. Let not inaction on the part of the minister, this government and CN permit what is a viable, developing industry in this part of B.C. to slacken off and stagnate. This does not take histrionics on the part of the minister as he tells us what he said or did not say; we want a response to this uncomplicated kind of request.

Perhaps the minister went out of the chamber to take this action, and if that is the case I am sure we would move quickly toward finding a solution to the problem. The minister does not need to ask me a rhetorical question such as whether I can tell him how he can get 4,000 cars there tomorrow, because I cannot. I do not want 4,000 cars there tomorrow, and even if I did it would be impossible to get them there. Not only that, it would be stupid in the extreme because there would be no place to put them. Boxcars have to flow in and out of the area commensurate with ability to load them. All we are requesting is a continual flow of boxcars so the lumber can be loaded and shipped out to the markets of North America, instead of letting the economic activity of the area to slacken off.

● (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, as all other hon. members, I have looked at Bill C-164 which reminds [Mr. Howard.]

us that our railway companies operations, particularly those of the Canadian National, are not self-financing.

Before coming to the House in 1965 and during the first years of my mandate, I thought incompetence was causing this unpleasant situation. That is indeed what one is led to believe upon analyzing only the official figures the Canadian National releases in its annual report. However a comparison of those reports made me realize that Canadian National administrators are highly competent people and remarkable figure jugglers. According to statements by the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and many of his Liberal colleagues, the CNR would now have the best administration of all times and our country would never have been so wealthy.

Then, Mr. Speaker, how come a railway company operating in such good conditions does not succeed in making both ends meet? To ask this question is to answer it. It is obvious that the Canadian people are simply cheated by such statements. If CNR administrators were badly paid, one might say: it is our fault. But it is not so, for even the President gets a suitable salary.

Mr. Speaker, it is often said that years follow each other but are very different. This is normal. But it is not normal, in my opinion, that the CN balance sheets are the same every year.

In 1962, the CNR had brought forward a balance sheet that shows a deficit of about \$6 million, while working expenses had been reasonable and the gross national production amounted to \$40 billion.

In 1971, while the gross national product had increased to \$93 billion in an inflationary time, after moving twice as many goods as during the period 1962-63 at rates that had also doubled, the Canadian National again succeeded in providing us with a table indicating \$24 million deficit.

Mr. Speaker, this year, a particularly prosperous year under a Liberal administration, their financial statement indicated a \$17 million deficit. For instance, if we refer to the statement of 1968 when the CNR stole \$371 million from the fund of its retired employees, we find also a table showing again that the deficit was about the same as this year's.

If misappropriating \$371 million is not reflected in the assets or liabilities of a balance sheet, I feel we should ask ourselves some questions. And I think that an investigation conducted by the RCMP will give an answer to our questions. If the Americans treated themselves to a Watergate, we, Canadians, should treat ourselves to the same. If we consider the financial statement of the CNR for the fiscal year 1970-71, we will see about the same deficit, that is \$29 million. However, we all know that it was not a lucky year but instead a derailment year. I would like to quote from an Appendix to the Debates of the Senate, on Tuesday May 15, 1973. They give a list of derailments involving expenditures of \$50,000 or more in 1970-71.

After adding the expenses incurred as a result of recent derailments throughout Canada, either in the Atlantic, St. Lawrence, Great Lakes, Prairies, Rockies areas, the total amount of \$13,692,000 is reached and this only in accidents amounting to \$50,000 and over. It is rather strange that we find almost the same causes for derailments in all provinces. We note that in the St. Lawrence area as in that of