

REED, MPP

Gray Coach problems

You will no doubt recall that in the early part of December, we raised in the Legislature the question of the Ontario Highway Transport Board ruling to allow Greyhound Lines of Canada Ltd. to run buses on routes between Toronto and Buffalo and Toronto and Sudbury, which are at present served by Gray Coach, a subsidiary of the Toronto Transit Commission. The Minister of Transportation and Communications told the Legislature, initially, that he agreed with the Board's reasons for giving this ruling - complaints of poor service by Gray Coach, and the need for competition on the routes in the public interest. Leonard Moynihan, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union charged that telegrams of support for the Greyhound service, from local unions, which had been read in the House by the Minister, were paid for by Greyhound, and that although more jobs might be provided, they would not be in Ontario, because Greyhound would then have a cross-Canada service, with drivers from the United States, or from Winnipeg driving through Ontario.

Stuart Smith expressed concern because the bus service to many small Ontario communities was threatened by the Transport Board's decision to permit an American-controlled company to operate on the two main Ontario routes in question, considering this a "sell-out to American interests at the expense of a Canadian company owned by Ontario taxpayers," and "equivalent to Ontario handing over a \$10 million public asset to a U.S.-controlled company."

After some two weeks of continuing pressure in the Legislature, the Ontario Cabinet told the Ontario Highway Transport Board to reconsider the decision to allow Greyhound Lines of Canada Ltd. to compete with the publicly-owned Gray Coach Lines Ltd. The Minister of Transportation and Communications asked the OHTB to re-examine the economic impact of the decision, and determine how this would affect bus service to smaller communities and Gray Coach finances. T.T.C. and union officials warned that more than 200 Ontario jobs could be lost and the company put in the red by \$300,000, although the President of Greyhound maintained the new routes to be granted his company would "increase employment in Ontario by at least 90 jobs - and perhaps as many as 130".

The re-hearing before the Ontario Highway Transport Board is now in progress in Toronto, and Division 113 of the Amalgamated Transit Union asked Stuart Smith to make a submission. He appeared before the Board on the 27th January, and stated that the Liberal Party "is opposed to the original decision of your Board which granted to Eastern Canada Greyhound, Greyhound Canada and to Stock Bros., the rights to run a competitive service on those routes which are most profitable to Gray Coach. Our opposition to your decision, Mr. Chairman, is based on the following points:

(1) Firstly, and most fundamentally, the decision to allow competition on certain routes appears to us to be in direct contravention of previously established and accepted policy which preserved exclusive carrier operating rights on major inter-urban routes. We do not believe that a decision to open up the bus routes across central Ontario to competitive licensing should be made by a regulatory agency without recourse to the Legislature. P.C.V. licensing changes are being considered by a Select Committee of the Legislature, and such a Committee is the logical place for policy decisions on basic alterations to this policy.

(2) We are profoundly concerned that a decision of your Board might force a public carrier, based in this Province, to restructure its operations in a manner that could, according to Gray Coach, result in the potential loss of 248 jobs in Ontario; that could result in reduction of service to some 62 rural communities in Ontario; and that may force an enterprise indirectly owned by the people of Ontario to face an annual financial reversal of approximately one million dollars. We are concerned because of the effect this will have on the total value of an asset owned by the people of Ontario; an effect that is tantamount to giving away a ten million dollar public asset to a privately-owned corporation. We recognize that in a legal sense, the franchises are privileges and not assets to be sold.



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