

Mr. GUTHRIE: The transportation companies of course are making a profit; but we want the immigration, and the law as it stands is so equitable that I see no reason to change it. The law provides that if the transportation company is to blame it shall pay, and if it is not to blame the passenger pays for his own medical bills, and if the passenger has no money the government pays. The minister proposes to put the whole burden on the transportation company, whether it is to blame or not. Surely one has only to state a case of that kind to show how unreasonable it is. This is the actual proposal of the minister, and the answer is that it only amounts to twenty-five cents a head. I would like to know under what circumstances the government will pay the medical bills of any other class in the country. They will not and they should not pay such bills. If the passenger has the money he should pay his own medical bills, and if he has not the money under the present law the government will relieve him. But why saddle the transportation companies with all the cost? They are not to blame. No matter how careful they are, accidents will happen. The minister has not given a reason for changing the present law. It is sound and backed by principle and reason; the amendment proposed is entirely without reason and without justice.

Mr. MILLAR: As the law stands at present, are we safe in inferring, if an immigrant suffering from a disease is allowed to pass an examination and brought to Canada, that either the transportation company or the government are responsible? The minister will know to what concrete case I am referring.

Mr. ROBB: I think under the case my hon. friend has in mind the transportation companies are wholly responsible. Is that the case of trachoma?

Mr. MILLAR: Yes.

Mr. ROBB: Yes, the transportation companies are wholly responsible.

Mr. ROSS (Kingston): I have read the amendment three or four times and it looks pretty severe. The government's official can go in when the boat lands, take a patient, and decide where the government will place that patient, and whether the transportation company is responsible for the illness or not. The government official has a right to decide where a patient will be placed, and then compel the transportation company to pay the expense. That is rather drastic, it seems to me, if I read the amendment correctly.

Mr. ROBB: It is in keeping with the other clauses which impose the deportation charges upon the company. Let us bear in mind that we are here to look after the interests of the people of Canada. There are some companies that will deal fairly and look after these matters; but I say frankly to my hon. friend, that there are other transportation companies that the department has to keep its eye on all the time.

Mr. ROSS (Kingston): I do not think the amendment is just to the companies who do play fair.

Mr. ROBB: They will look after themselves on the other side.

Mr. ROSS (Kingston): The illness may have nothing to do with the other side.

Mr. ROBB: That is very rare.

Mr. ROSS (Kingston): Still it is easy for the government to protect the immigrants and take care of them, without being unjust to the companies. The present law protects them, but it seems to me rather drastic for the government officials to have the power to come in, take a patient, decide where they will place him and then say that the transportation companies shall pay their bill.

Mr. ROBB: We are anxious to see that the transportation companies are not unduly taxing the people of Canada.

Mr. BOYS: I suppose the transportation companies are familiar with this proposed change?

Mr. ROBB: Yes.

Mr. BOYS: Have they objected to it, and if so to what extent? Do they all object? As far as I have been able to understand it I agree with the hon. member for South Wellington, (Mr. Guthrie). It seems to me manifestly unjust to hold a transportation company liable when they are guilty of no neglect whatever.

Mr. ROBB: There has been no considerable objection to this section. My hon. friend knows very well that the transportation companies object to every additional charge that is put upon them. All they are looking after particularly is getting earnings for their steamships. If we were running steamships probably we would do the same thing. But we are here to look after the interests of the taxpayers of Canada, and any transportation company that is careful in its selection of passengers brought to Canada will not suffer any undue burden under this section.