

*Transportation*

in which we handle our grain today. When we began to market large quantities of grain over 50 years ago, we had the most modern system in the world for handling it. Today this once modern system is not keeping abreast of progress. We are moving much larger quantities of grain, so I think we need research to investigate all the phases of grain handling from the standpoint of the railway, and not only from the standpoint of the railway but from the standpoint of the elevator and the terminal.

● (8:40 p.m.)

A transportation research chair set up in one of the universities, and provided with adequate funds, could investigate fully the ways in which the railways are operating today and I am sure could come up with more modern, more efficient and economical ways of getting our products, and particularly our grain products, to the markets of the world. I strongly commend the bill for the opportunity it provides for such research to be done. I sincerely hope the fullest opportunity will be taken to implement this provision in the bill, and especially that sufficient funds are made available so research can be vigorously pursued.

Rail line abandonments have been a subject which has aroused a great deal of concern in my area of the country, and in particular in my constituency. When the original abandonments were proposed I believe there were more miles of track to be abandoned in the constituency of Kindersley than in any other constituency in the Dominion of Canada. The interest of the people of my constituency is, then, understandable and so of course is my interest. As these abandonments began to be listed in large numbers there was great satisfaction when the previous Conservative ministry, in January 1962, put a stop to the processing of all abandonments until a thorough investigation had taken place.

It is notable that the present government has continued this freeze and that no abandonments have been proceeded with since that date. A great many abandonments have been listed and now there is a quite comprehensive map which shows the abandonments or suggested abandonments.

When Bill No. C-120 was proposed in September 1964 there were provisions for abandonment in the bill which were extremely unsatisfactory. Those of you who are familiar with it will remember that a rationalization authority was proposed, and that this

rationalization authority actually had no authority. If a line were proved to be uneconomic, and so said to be by the Board of Transport Commissioners, all that the so-called authority could do was to say when the line was to be abandoned within a time period of five years. The only discretionary power it had was to set a date for abandonment. We fought this very strongly in the informal meetings that were held in the fall of 1964 and the minister withdrew the bill. He must have considered seriously our representations.

In the new Bill No. C-231 the rationalization authority has been eliminated. Instead the new Transport Commission has power to consider the rationalization proposals, and after thorough investigation may order abandonment, but only if the line is uneconomic. It has very wide powers to consider not only the report of the railway company on the profit-making position of the branch line, but also the effect the abandonment will have on the community. So there is a quite notable improvement in the bill in this respect.

The minister on several occasions, in answer to my question whether funds will be provided, has clearly indicated that moneys will be available under certain conditions to assist the provinces to build roads which might take the place of lines which are abandoned. This has been done already in one instance.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that I have succeeded in making the following points: First of all, that a railway is an instrument of national policy; second, that in my view a railway is still a monopoly, and this demands control of rail rates; third, that a railroad might practise area discrimination; fourth, that there must be a way to evaluate the work of the new transport commission; fifth, that research is needed and that funds must be sufficient to do a good job and sixth, that assistance for road building must be provided where a rail line is abandoned.

I do not suggest, Mr. Chairman, that this to any degree exhausts what can be said about this bill and the policies of the minister with respect to it. The minister and the government have been fortunate in that the opposition has vigorously opposed the suggested railway legislation. It may have taken two and a half years to get this legislation through, but in consequence of our opposition I feel that some bad faults have been corrected. The minister has now come up with an over-all policy for transportation. Rail line abandonment policy has been radically changed and the rights of communities are, I hope, now to