

*Branch Railway Lines*

the other hand such matters as national unity, Canadian trade, the development of new areas and matters of defence. I wish to deal only briefly with the question of passenger train services. I think it is worth mentioning at this time, as the hon. member for Port Arthur has already pointed out, that there has already been a substantial change in the past year and a half with respect to the usage of railway passenger facilities. The introduction of red, white and blue days and the introduction of special excursion rates certainly have attracted a great deal more business to passenger trains from one end of Canada to the other.

We are looking forward to celebrating our 100th birthday three years hence, Mr. Chairman, and among the plans that are being made at the present time for our centennial celebrations is the idea that it would be desirable to have a great movement of people from certain areas of Canada into other areas, resulting in an intermingling of the people from one area with those of another so they can understand each other better. It is thought that this massive movement of people to various regions of Canada during that year will help to strengthen national understanding and national unity. I do not think any reasonable member of the house will question the validity of these plans and the anticipated results. But, Mr. Chairman, during the summer of 1964, when as yet there has not been any real attempt by the centennial committee or other interested persons and groups of persons to encourage such a movement of people, we find that the railway passenger facilities have been used to the maximum all summer.

I have attempted on many occasions, as I am sure other hon. members have, to obtain reservations on some of our passenger trains and have found that there was absolutely nothing available for days and in some cases weeks in advance of the date on which I wished to travel. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, if the railways are now utilizing all of their usable equipment for moving passengers throughout Canada, what are they going to be using in 1967 for what has been described as a massive movement of people from one region to another? It seems obvious to me that even in this year the railways do not have the equipment to take care of the demands that have been made upon them, and certainly we cannot look to 1967 with any degree of optimism that the plans of the centennial committee are going to be realized. Therefore, while I believe that perhaps there

is a need for some subsidies for passenger train services to keep them in operation, I think that since the MacPherson commission made its recommendations there has been a very substantial change in the use of the passenger train facilities and this should be taken into consideration.

If these plans for 1967 are going to materialize, certainly the railways are going to have to produce a lot of new equipment. Maybe prior to the MacPherson commission hearings the railways ought to have taken the action they have now taken. If this had been done they probably would not have experienced a drastic falling off in the use of passenger train facilities. We think that perhaps we have already passed the point where we need to take another look at passenger train service in Canada. I might say that the MacPherson commission came to this conclusion in its report:

Uneconomic passenger services exist over the whole length and breadth of the nation but with different degrees of intensity... We regard the provision of these services, whether they be required by law, tradition or public policy, as national obligations upon the railways and a burden upon them and the other users of rail services.

We in the Social Credit party feel it is the responsibility of the house to assist the board of transport commissioners in determining whether there may be alternative public transportation available in some cases that could be used by people who normally use railway passenger service, provided they will not be subjected to too much inconvenience. Then there are other important considerations which must be kept in mind such as the severe weather conditions that exist in some parts of Canada in the winter and which, if no adequate public highway is provided, may result in the isolation of those areas for certain periods of time.

The minister in his introductory remarks this afternoon, and I intend to deal with this more fully in a minute, said that the government was preparing for some subsidies. I think he referred to specific subsidies rather than a grant or a large subsidy without any specific purpose. Some of the subsidies paid during the past four or five years, of course, have been in the form of large grants without any accounting being made of how the money has been used.

We believe there may be some instances where assistance could be granted to improve other facilities in local areas, particularly highway transportation, and that if this were done the money would be better spent.