

*Transportation*

farmer operating a 500-acre farm will find that his cost of operation has increased in the order of \$400, \$500, \$600 or \$700 a year because of increased cost of haulage, etc.

The minister should also bear in mind that the Crowsnest rates admittedly are a very direct and great advantage and benefit to western grain producers. No one questions that for a moment. That is one of the reasons the hon. member for Acadia and others have been carrying on quite a running battle on the provisions of this bill having to do with the Crowsnest rates.

Let me relate this point to the provisions in this particular clause of the bill. If a branch line is abandoned and a farmer has to haul his grain a little farther, it really means two things. First of all, it means increased cost of haulage and increased production costs. Second, it means that the Crowsnest rates are to some degree being pulled away from him and denied him. Up to a given point in time that farmer will have had the advantage of the statutory grain haulage rates. If a local branch line is abandoned and he has to haul his grain by truck he loses a fraction of the advantage he receives from the Crowsnest statutory rates.

What we are doing in effect is this. By adopting this course of action and allowing abandonments to take place, which in certain cases may well be necessary, we are taking away from individual producers certain statutory advantages which others will continue to enjoy. It therefore follows that the commission should—at least, someone should and I presume the commission should in the first instance—take into consideration the fact that a farmer's cost of production is going to go up as a result of particular action taken under the provisions of this bill. Second, it should consider the fact that this farmer and others in the same district will be deprived of part of the statutory advantage derived from the Crowsnest rates.

In my view, Mr. Chairman, I am not really expanding the intent of the bill. The minister himself gave me the assurance in committee that the commission can very well take all these things I have enumerated into account. What I am seeking to do by this amendment is to give more clearcut terms of reference to the commission in this respect. It is merely a matter of spelling out specifically something which is generally implied in subsection (4). On that basis I hope that the minister will find no objection to it.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to deal right away with the points made by the hon. gentleman. The only possible objection I could have to his amendment is that it makes the bill a little longer. It seems to me that it is really substantially redundant. If the hon. member will look at the bottom of page 26 of the bill he will see that section 314C(3) says:

In determining whether an uneconomic branch line or any segment thereof should be abandoned, the commission shall consider all matters that in its opinion are relevant to the public interest including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing,—

Then let me read a few of the following paragraphs.

● (5:30 p.m.)

(b) the alternative transportation facilities available or likely to be available to the area served by the branch line;

(c) the period of time reasonably required for the purpose of adjusting any facilities, wholly or in part dependent on the services provided by the branch line, with the least disruption to the economy of the area served by the line;

I do not think (d) is very relevant.

(e) the economic effects of the abandonment of the operation of the branch line on the communities and areas served by the branch line;

There is some doubt in my mind whether the illustrative expansion which the hon. gentleman would seek to put into new section 314D would in fact add anything more than is already comprehended in those three specific directions to the commission. But if he felt it did in any way add something that was not there I would see no objection whatever to including these words, except the original objection I gave—and perhaps, the committee should be inured to it by this time—that I am not too fond of repetition.

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to raise one or two points respecting this amendment and the argument advanced by the hon. member who moved it. What the minister has said with reference to the provisions to be found on page 26 of the bill does not meet the situation entirely. These provisions say that the commission may take into account actual losses, alternative transportation and the economic effects of the abandonment or operation of a branch line. I would like the minister to be completely aware of the fact, if he is not aware of it already, that the commission does not have the authority to change any of the statutes of Canada.