

Heritage Railway Stations

attended a meeting of the Big Rock Club. It is named after a large rock in the Okotoks area.

● (1710)

In High River, they made the station into a museum. In the village of Beiseker, they turned the station completely around so that it would face Main Street. It remained in the same location but completely turned around. It was made into the town hall and included the council chamber and village office. They used a little imagination and put in the library. The person who looked after the library was also to look after a small store which sold knitted goods, clothes, fancy dishes and moulded items to tourists. Some splendid things have been done. We want the same to happen in every town and village across the nation.

When I was pursuing this subject I wondered whether this was only an Alberta problem. Therefore, I wrote to some of the Ministers across Canada. I will read a few excerpts from what some of these Ministers said. The Hon. Billy Joe MacLean, Minister of Culture, Recreation and Fitness for the Province of Nova Scotia, after mentioning that his staff is undertaking a study of transportation heritage, wrote:

I mention these activities to make clear my desire that action be taken by legislative and other means to protect and/or recycle railway heritage properties.

The Hon. James Chabot, Minister of Government Services for the Province of British Columbia, said:

The protection of railway stations with heritage significance is a concern of my Ministry.

The Hon. Rick Folk, Minister of Culture and Recreation for the Province of Saskatchewan, stated:

Your proposed Bill to protect railway stations across the country is a most welcome item of legislation, and this Department certainly supports your efforts.

The Hon. Eugene Kostrya, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation for the Province of Manitoba, said:

—this is a current concern of the Province of Manitoba and although we have made significant headway in our efforts, support at the federal level is essential.

The provinces are supporting it. I was very happy to have the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) say that he was interested in supporting the Bill. He is in the House today. Also, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) indicated to me that he would give strong support to this Bill.

The Bill is not complete. I have read quotations from various Ministers. Some Ministers had concern as well. One concern was the matter of land on which the building was sitting and whether that would be looked after. There are concerns and probably some ramifications. Consequently, I would not expect the House simply to pass the Bill as it is and say that's it. Either we pass the Bill and it goes to committee, where it receives a lot of consideration, or we discharge second reading of the Bill, which I hope the House will do, and send the subject matter of the Bill to committee for consideration. Perhaps it could come back here in the form of a government Bill. That is what is important. We need protection for these stations. Therefore, I take great pleasure in moving second reading of Bill C-211, an Act to protect heritage railway stations.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are glad to support this excellent Bill. I congratulate the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) for having taken this initiative. I also want to pay homage to the work done, as he mentioned, by the former Member from High Park who was extremely interested in this issue.

We have come to this conclusion because of experiences at the municipal level for many of us as a result of the existence of historical buildings, not necessarily railway buildings, being threatened. Often the feeling was very strong in the community that without the history provided by a building, a nation loses its sense of history. It has to be passed from one generation to the other in order that we can understand lifestyles, ways of communicating and moving people, in the case of railways, for generations preceding the one that still has the benefit of admiring certain buildings.

In north Toronto we had a very sad experience a few years ago. The Canadian Pacific Railway station, despite enormous interest expressed by local community groups and the endorsement of the mayor and some Members of Parliament from that part of the city, was all of a sudden destroyed. That building had character. Alternative future uses had been proposed. That experience left a very bitter taste in the mouths of the citizens. Canadian Pacific displayed a distressing insensitivity to the will of the population there. Many had been born around the station, grew up and had learned to appreciate the presence of that station. It had a beautiful architectural design, was functional, had character and, as I said, a future. That building is gone. Therefore, there is the necessity for taking certain measures such as that proposed by the Hon. Member for Bow River. We are glad to see his initiative. We congratulate and applaud him. We hope this initiative will go to committee for further study and improvement.

The federal Government does not necessarily have the final word in this matter. It is mainly a provincial and municipal power to be exerted. Nevertheless, it will have an exemplary effect and a symbolic meaning. It will be useful to citizen groups. They will be extremely grateful to the Hon. Member for Bow River if this Bill becomes adopted one day. It will be appreciated by present and future generations of Canadians.

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, like probably every other Member in this House, I am delighted every time the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) gets to his feet, particularly on this occasion when he is bringing forward a subject matter and a Bill that deals with an area that all of us from time to time are touched by, namely the heritage of Canada. We are doubly pleased. We congratulate him on his efforts and the excellent remarks that he made in bringing forward this topic and this subject matter.

We can all understand his references to the number of facilities or railway stations in his area that either have been or might be affected if we do not do something constructive and approach this problem, which does not rest only in his constituency but exists right across Canada. We are looking for ways