

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

fishermen—then we would all be better off. Not only would there be better public relations between the minister and his department and the fishermen concerned, but I suggest some more constructive steps could be taken.

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment and Minister of Fisheries): Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of any fishery in Canada that is conducted on a more democratic basis. The fishermen in question are polled as to their preference and the Department of Fisheries does its best to accommodate their preference as far as length of season is concerned. The hon. member may not be aware of this, but in the United States there is no season whatsoever. In Canada, we have different seasons in different areas, based primarily on the wishes of the lobster fishermen.

The present lobster season in district No. 5 in Nova Scotia was established on May 25, 1971, following a survey which indicated that the vast majority, 85 to 90 per cent, of the licensed lobster fishermen in that district favoured a 60-day season opening on April 10 and closing on June 10 of that year. The hon. member has suggested to me in previous correspondence that the lobster fishermen of district No. 5 would now prefer a return to the former 80-day fishing season opening on April 10 and closing on June 30.

• (2210)

I have been advised that this question could properly be resolved based on fishermen's preference. In a letter dated December 14 I told the hon. member that all fishermen would be requested to indicate their preference for the June 10 or June 30 closing date at the time they purchase their licences in the spring. I can now report to the hon. member that this instruction has been issued and that the question is being asked of all fishermen who are now purchasing licences in district No. 5. In this way we hope to obtain a valid survey of the opinion of licensed lobstermen in district No. 5 on this question.

In addition, I will now undertake to make public the results of this survey. I also undertake to change the closing date if the survey results in a clear indication that this measure is what most lobstermen want. Finally, if a change in the closing date is to take place, the order to this effect will be issued in time to implement the new closing date this year, 1972.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY—REMOVAL OF STATION AGENTS, SASKATCHEWAN AND ALBERTA—
CONSIDERATION OF NATURE OF UNDERTAKINGS BY COMPANY IN REVIEW

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, today questions were asked in the House about the decision rendered by the Canadian Transport Commission with respect to the application of Canadian Pacific Railway to remove some 56 station agents, nine caretakers and four caretaker agents from stations in Saskatchewan, four agents and three caretakers from stations in Alberta. As a substitute, Canadian Pacific Railway proposed a customer service centre at Saskatoon to serve all of the northern settled area of Saskatchewan and some parts of Alberta.

[Mr. MacKay.]

I was very happy that the minister undertook to look at the situation. My question drew special attention to the fact that the decision rendered by the Canadian Transport Commission was conditional upon certain undertakings and commitments given by the CPR and to which the commission seemed to attach considerable importance. In my view, these commitments and undertakings were fatuous and meaningless and I feel they impose a special obligation upon the government to review this matter. I was happy to note that the minister stated he would take note of this particular factor.

The background of the situation is that the CPR made application early in 1969 to abandon the stations as noted, and to substitute the customer service centre located in Saskatoon. The Canadian Transport Commission decision was rendered on January 5, 1971. On February 4, 1971, the government of Saskatchewan applied to the commission to review its decision. A review was ordered. I might say that the action of the Saskatchewan government was continued later in the year in spite of the fact that there had been a change of government in the interim. Mr. Speaker, hearings were ordered as a result of this review and these were held early in December, 1971, taking nine days and hearing 96 witnesses. This demonstrates the interest in this matter. Now the decision has been rendered by the Canadian Transport Commission to let its original decision stand.

My question arose in part as a result of reading the decision of the commission, which seemed to leave the impression that it rejected all those who in any way opposed or stood in the way of the CPR or its aims and objectives. It seemed to accept the CPR argument as being the final word.

I want to take note of the position of the province of Saskatchewan in this regard, which was noted in the report of the committee, where it is pointed out that Mr. Blair, speaking on behalf of the government of Saskatchewan, stated that it is not opposed to the aspects of the customer service centre concept which will provide equal or better service to its citizens and it recognizes the need for change where change is justified.

Mr. Speaker, I also note that there are other matters which should be reviewed by the cabinet. I note in particular that they draw on the experience in the Regina and Moose Jaw areas in the customer service centre operations that have been established there. They note that there no information was given to the committee which could be regarded as evidence of lack of satisfaction with the operation of this plan. Mr. Speaker, I submit that there has been no proper study of the operation of the customer service centre plan in this particular area of the province, and the committee should not reach the type of conclusion it did unless a proper study is carried out.

But the CTC overruled all objections that were made and gave the CPR authority to proceed with its new plan and made this conditional upon the conditions of the CPR. I want to take note of the conditions which were given by the CPR. First of all, CP rail will, with the Railway Transport Committee's permission, introduce the CSC system on the Saskatoon division. That is rather elementary. Second, CP rail will provide a Zenith telephone system with customer toll-free, 24-hour, 7-day operation. This totally ignores the many complaints which