

Railway Act

An hon. Member: Let him laugh that one off.

Mr. Benidickson: I wonder if the hon. member was listening when the Speaker read the purposes of the bill.

Mr. Bigg: I am confining my remarks to whether or not the service on this line should be curtailed or should be discontinued. I think what I am saying is relevant to the question when, as I have said, seven box car loads of salt can come out of one village each day.

It has been suggested that this line be torn up and if that is done or the service discontinued this mill will close down and 50 families will have to leave the area and seek employment elsewhere. That I do not think is a laughing matter, and the people of Athabasca certainly do not think it is a laughing matter for they have sent me to Ottawa to try to do something about it.

Mr. Winch: Very well then, support this bill.

Mr. Bigg: To support this bill is correct, but as the minister has pointed out, the bill itself is unnecessary because the Railway Act covers the problem.

Mr. Winch: It does not.

Mr. Bigg: The act does cover the problem but my hon. friends will, I believe, have an opportunity to speak again, so in the meantime may I continue, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Winch: On the bill.

Mr. Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Bigg: We have another rail line branching off from this one which ends at the town of Grand Centre. Grand Centre is the shopping centre for the Cold lake airport. From the east comes another railroad line where there is a gap of approximately 100 miles and the people of Grand Centre are faced with the same problem which they have in Heinsburg. If this railroad line also is torn up or the service is curtailed the people of Grand Centre will suffer in the same way. There are no all-weather roads as an alternative and I think this is relevant to the point under consideration because we are talking about transportation and a fair deal in transportation for all the people of Canada. The results of this bill would have to be paid for by the people of Canada and I think therefore that all the people of Canada, including those of Newfoundland, are interested in the welfare of every other province.

I believe this is a matter which is important, although I have only touched upon it very briefly because I do not now wish to take up the time of the house in view of the fact that it is obvious that it is the opinion of some people that I am stretching the railway

question just a little too far. I will therefore express my views on this subject when a better opportunity presents itself.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, possibly before I launch into my observations on this matter, in view of the ruling which has been made and which of course I accept, sir, I might mention that I had intended to approach the matter in this way, that this bill appears to be appended to section 168 of the Railway Act, which reads as follows:

The company—

Referring to railway companies.

—may abandon the operation of any line of railway with the approval of the board, and no company shall abandon the operation of any line of railway without such approval.

This bill, of course, refers to the right of a municipality to appeal to the board with respect to the curtailment of services. I will state what I have in mind at once, and that is that in considering this question of abandonment or curtailment the matter cannot be dealt with without a proper study and survey of the economic factors which justified the original construction of the line and of the route it follows. I wish to discuss, secondly, the question of the route of the railway which is now proposed on the basis that in my opinion if proper considerations are not given to the choice of route it might be necessary at some time to apply under the terms of the section I have quoted, either as it is now or as it may be amended, for the right to abandon or curtail such services. With deference, if I am not in opposition to your ruling, sir, I would like to say that I had intended to confine my remarks to the question of a proper choice of route for the railway now proposed so that there would be no need for recourse to this particular section.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the hon. member but I rise on a point of order with respect to what he has just said. The bill before the house has nothing whatever to do with the routes of the railways or with abandonments. It has to do with only a reference of curtailment of services to the board of transport commissioners and with no other principle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rea): I must once again direct the remarks of hon. members to the points contained in the explanatory notes, or hon. members may read the actual amendment. The hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) is quite correct. This amendment pertains only to reduction of services. There is nothing to do with—

An hon. Member: And appeals to the board.