

Branch Railway Lines

thing in the Railway Act that needs to be replaced in order to carry out the intent of the bill. It will also, in an ancillary way, amend one or two other acts; but in the main it will only represent an amendment to the Railway Act.

The hon. member for Port Arthur and the hon. member for Medicine Hat both dealt with a problem which is certainly one of the most serious in connection with this legislation, and that is the method by which abandonments, rationalizations or more efficient planning of branch lines is to be carried out. I was really hurt by what the hon. member for Port Arthur said when he referred to my English, because I did think it was rather an improvement to talk about obtaining more efficient operations than about abandonment of things. The resolution refers to improved efficiency of railway branch lines. Anyone who is familiar with the prairies will know that in many cases in the days when there was, what the hon. gentleman would call more perfect competition, Mackenzie and Mann built railways paralleling railways that had already been built by the C.P.R. In some of those cases neither line is a paying proposition, as long as both are in existence. However, if one of them is removed the other will probably be self-supporting. This is precisely the kind of situation in each of the various regions of the prairies the government intends the rationalization authority should consider before abandonments are permitted.

Mr. Chairman, I do not intend tonight to go into all the detail that will be included in the bill, about how this process is to be carried out, because this is rather complicated and I think we should have the document before us so we will all be on equal terms when we are debating it. I did however want to make it quite clear that it is to avoid a situation which has existed in the past, where each case was considered in complete isolation from all the rest of the structure of the railways, that we are proposing this legislation, and substituting for that type of consideration a consideration in respect of the effect on the whole region, and proposing, moreover, that it shall be under the jurisdiction of and responsible to the Minister of Agriculture. I have been asked why this was being done. It is being done precisely because, in the main, the users of the railways, which in most cases are candidates for abandonment, are farmers, and it is because the rationalization authority will be considering primarily the economic effect on a community and not pri-

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

marily the interests of the railways, that it seemed more appropriate that the minister who was more familiar and perhaps more directly concerned with the interests of the consumers of railway services, should have charge of that authority.

There is just one other point I think perhaps I should mention. I hope that the intervals of time suggested by the hon. member for Medicine Hat are a little greater than will really be necessary, because if we are going to have six weeks before the committee can even start, and other adjournments of perhaps three weeks, it does look as though the hon. member for Port Arthur may be right about the prospects for this legislation. At the same time, it would be far better to get the legislation right than to try and get it hastily through and have it wrong, because I think even the limited debate we have had so far does justify one observation I made, that this is a subject that is very close to all of us in this country. Railways and railway legislation are really still of the utmost economic importance, the utmost social importance and the utmost national importance. Even if it takes a lot longer than some of us would like, we must be sure that we do this job properly and with all the wisdom we can bring to bear upon it.

Resolution reported and concurred in.

Mr. Pickersgill thereupon moved for leave to introduce Bill No. C-120, to amend the Railway Act, the Transport Act and the Canadian National Railways Act, and to repeal the Canadian National-Canadian Pacific Act.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether it would be the pleasure of the house to dispose of now, without debate, item No. 51, which was referred to a few minutes ago, so that the bill could be placed in everybody's hands. I refer to the measure to authorize the Canadian National Railway Company to make capital expenditures and to supply the financial requirements of affiliated companies in the year 1964.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable change in the attitude of the hon. member for Lapointe over the years because I think this is the legislation on which he has always taken the opportunity to deal rather