

Railway Act

is very important to note that the Prairie Rail Authority, the establishment of which was suggested by Mr. Justice Hall, has not been set up. It was considered that it would be a western based organization because, in any case, the Canadian Transport Commission is not interested in the west. The Prairie Rail Authority, it was hoped, would be a body which would have an influence on the CTC but would be based in western Canada, be sensitive to our needs and would make suggestions for the welfare of the transportation industry.

In fact, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) has set up the prairie rail action committee. It has the same initials but it is an entirely different body. Whereas the Prairie Rail Authority was to report on the 2,500 miles of rails—it was doubtful whether they should be included or abandoned—it was to be an ongoing committee which would take care of things for the five to ten years in the 1980's while the consolidation process went on. In fact the prairie rail action committee was set up to make a report by the end of September, 1978.

Obviously it is far too soon for the rail companies and the grain handling companies to decide where they want to have their grain elevators, which branch lines should be closed down and which should be kept open. The action of the railways and of the Minister of Transport, with the bill now before the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration regarding hours of work and dust collection, will result in the

closing down of many of the smaller elevators and in practice consolidating them in a much larger area.

For instance, there is a branch line in my riding which is closed down for almost eight months in the year. As soon as the first snow comes, the line is shut down. There may occasionally be some hauling when the spring break-up comes, but in general for two or three months after the snow disappears the line is considered to be soft and no grain is hauled out of there. So in effect the farmers are gradually learning to haul grain by truck to elevators located on the main line. This means that we will lose many lines in western Canada through lack of use because the railways are not providing an alternative or a reasonable service on these lines.

One of the tragedies of railroading in western Canada is that it is controlled in the east. Management of the CNR, which used to be in Winnipeg, at least so far as the western regions are concerned, has been consolidated in Montreal. It shows in the actions it has taken that it has very little knowledge of our situation.

May I call it ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being ten o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

At ten o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.