

Railway Act

I presume that condition exists not only in Toronto but in Montreal, Vancouver, Hamilton, London and in all the large cities of the Dominion of Canada.

Owing to their lack of foresight and lack of funds—but mostly, I would presume, through lack of foresight—they had never made any provision for extension or expansion of the services. In fact, at the time when we were trying to establish the electric railways under Sir Adam Beck's regime of Hydro, he pointed out that the day would come when they would need such services. The president of one of the railways, Sir Henry Thornton, joined with those who were opposing that extension of radial services in Toronto at that time. I assert that, owing to the fact that they wrecked that radial plan therefore it is their duty to supply something to help to overcome the condition they created. Therefore I have no sympathy with the railway or with the president Mr. Gordon when he tells us now that if we want this service, we should pay for it. They created this condition at Toronto.

Of course in the last decade or the last two decades, Toronto was more or less a forgotten city as far as this parliament was concerned. They did not supply us with services. So whenever an opportunity comes along when we can draw the matter to the attention of this house that the railways, through their transport board, should do something, I shall do so. I think that they should supplement or augment the services they are now giving. They have never really tried to give the service that we should like to have in Toronto. I think the people would be willing to pay for it.

I point this out, Mr. Speaker, because the situation has become so serious now in the large centres that they now have to have subways and they are very expensive. I would go so far as to say that if we had an adequate commuter service in the city of Toronto we would not be confronted today with the expense which we are now facing with regard to establishing another subway along Bloor, Danforth and University streets in Toronto. Therefore when the matter is being brought to the attention of the house by the Minister of Transport, that there is a provision in the act for what the hon. member for Kootenay West is requesting—that it is there but they have not taken proper procedure to bring to the attention of the house the situation whenever the railways are curtailing their services—I thought I would take this opportunity because the last time I brought it before the house very little attention was paid. I presume that the railway authorities likewise will treat it in the same fashion.

[Mr. Small.]

While I am at it I would say that there should be a certain checkup on the efficiency of the railway department responsible particularly for the pool service, not singling out anyone in particular. Those that come into the station, whether they come in in the morning or at night, get ample evidence of what kind of service the railway is giving the people of Ottawa. Likewise they are getting ample evidence of the kind of service we are getting in Toronto.

If a private business were to operate in the same manner as that in which the railways are operating, and treat their customers with such contempt for their convenience they would not be in business very long. It looks as though this is what the railways are trying to accomplish. When you arrive at the Ottawa station you find baggage cars and postal service cars occupying the space in the station right up to the door, and the passengers who are paying for it all have to walk from perhaps Laurier avenue all the way to the railway station. Not only that, but they have to sometimes even climb over trucks and crates and freight and wind their way, possibly helping some helpless woman who cannot carry her grip under the various difficulties which one has always to face because of the handicaps mentioned. This applies not only to Ottawa but to Toronto and I dare say many other Canadian cities suffer likewise. It is the service and the convenience of the passenger which they should be looking after but sorry to say it is freight that gets the nod because that is the most lucrative part of their business. Yet, in this act it distinctly says the railways are to provide adequate and convenient service for the people of the Dominion of Canada, and I can assure the house—and I believe every member will subscribe to what I have said—that the service, to use impolite terms, is absolutely lousy.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take up the time of the house for more than one second. I am going to vote for this bill because it seems to me that what it provides is exactly what the hon. member for Danforth (Mr. Small) so eloquently said ought to be provided—a proper place for a proper hearing of these matters, and that is all the hon. gentleman is asking for in this bill. It seems to me it would be a good thing, therefore, if it were passed.

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): I would like to join my colleague the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill) in expressing my support of the principle of this bill, and I would also like to commend the