

Transportation

It is my view that this is a matter of judgment. The chairman of the committee of the whole has weighed both arguments. He is familiar with the terms of the bill. He has had the bill before him in committee for many days. In his judgment, after hearing lengthy argument, he has ruled that the amendment proposed is beyond the purport of the clause and the bill. In view of the uncertainty in respect of the general question I do not think I should substitute my judgment for that of the chairman who has heard the argument. I have also heard the argument, which I understand was repeated in capsule form, and I must conclude that I have to support the decision of the chairman of the committee.

The committee will now resume its consideration of the bill.

And the house having resumed in committee.

On clause 42—

Mr. Schreyer: Mr. Chairman, before we leave new section 314D I should like to make some remarks and observations in respect of subsection (4). Actually I had hoped to do so before the hon. member for Nickel Belt took the floor, but the Minister of Transport invited him to move his amendment.

Mr. Pickersgill: I was seeking to preserve his right because he had spoken to me last evening.

Mr. Schreyer: Yes. I am not complaining; I am merely stating the reason I have not made these remarks earlier. I should like to appeal to members of the committee and the minister to look at subsection (4) of new section 314D in this way: I would hope we would be able to tighten up the wording of this provision so that it could be refined and made more brief. I do not think it is fair, as is the case here, to give the commission powers and terms of reference which read in such a very general and imprecise way. I hope that in this paragraph we can provide some specific terms of reference to complement, not to contradict, the general terms of reference given here.

● (5:20 p.m.)

As I understand the intent or purport of subsection (4) it is that the commission may, when considering applications for abandonment, take into consideration such matters as increased cost to the community, increased cost of road building to the municipalities and the provinces, and losses to people who hold

[Mr. Speaker.]

investments that might be described as rail-tied. The commission may also take into consideration such matters as increased cost of production to farmers as a result of abandonment from having to haul their grain a considerable distance farther to the shipping point. I take it that all these things can be taken into account by the commission in considering applications for abandonment.

The ground on which the commission takes these matters into consideration is, I assume, to be found in the proposed section 314D (4). It is one thing, Mr. Chairman, for a member of the committee to assume this; it is quite another thing to have it clearly embodied in the statute. I therefore ask the minister whether he will consider giving consideration to an amendment which I should like to move at this time. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Nickel Belt:

That clause 314D (4) be amended by adding to subparagraph (b) the following:

"and in particular, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing, in respect of any action causing or likely to cause increased expenditures by municipal or provincial authorities, or increased costs of production or sudden losses to holders of rail-tied investment".

If I may continue my argument in support of this amendment, I suggest to the minister that if he were to give some thought to the consideration which took place when the bill was before the standing committee he would recall some hon. members, myself included, raising the question of what might be done with respect to new problems which would crop up as a result of the passage of this bill. For example, the bill provides for abandonment of certain lines. It provides the procedure by which abandonment applications shall be heard and approved or rejected. In the event that abandonments are granted it is obvious that such action will have a great many ramifications of the kind to which I have already made brief reference.

When a farmer is required to move grain by truck an additional distance to some rail centre it is a fact the farmer's cost of production increases in a very substantial manner. It is estimated that the cost of truck haulage of grain runs in the order of a quarter to half a cent per bushel mile. Conceivably it could happen—I am sure it will as a result of the implementation of certain clauses of this bill over the years—that some farmers will simply have to haul their grain 15, 20 or 25 miles farther than they are at the moment because of some rail line abandonment. This means in a very rough and approximate way that a