

HERITAGE RAILWAY STATION PROTECTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River) moved that Bill C-211, an Act to protect heritage railway stations, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to move second reading of this Bill, an Act to protect heritage railway stations, known as Bill C-211. I should like to pay tribute to the former Hon. Member for Parkdale-High Park because he actually had the Bill prepared by the legislative counsel. I was in the process of preparing a similar Bill when the former Hon. Member introduced this one. When the Hon. Member was not re-elected, we decided that we might just as well use the same Bill, as they were so similar. I pay tribute to him for preparing this Bill.

I should like to deal with what the Bill really does. If it is passed, it means that no railway company or any other company shall remove, destroy, sell, assign, transfer or otherwise dispose of a heritage railway station owned by it or otherwise under its control, unless authorized by an order of the Governor in Council or, in other words, of Cabinet. Any company which contravenes this Act, once it is passed, is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not less than \$50,000 or not more than \$1 million.

Another clause of the Bill provides that if a company plans to remove, destroy, sell, assign, transfer or otherwise dispose of a heritage station owned or controlled by it, it must file an application for authorization to do so with the Minister in accordance with the regulations passed by the Governor in Council. After having given public notice of its intention, the company files notice with the Minister. Concurrently with the said filing, the company shall submit to the Minister a profit and loss statement of its estimated annual losses for preserving the said station and of any other expenses the company would likely incur in future years as a result of the application being refused.

Any person who objects to an application for authorization shall within the stipulated time within the Act serve notice on the Minister setting out the reason for the objection and any relevant facts, so that the general public has an opportunity to say why a station should not be destroyed, sold, et cetera. Upon the expiration of the stipulated time, the Minister refers the matter to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board for a hearing and report. The Board then holds a hearing as soon as possible after publishing notice in at least one newspaper in each official language in general circulation in the municipality in which the station is located. The Board must grant all interested persons a reasonable chance to appear before it to make representations. After the representations have been heard, the Board must within 30 days submit a report not only to the Minister in charge of this particular Bill, but also to the Minister of Transport setting out its findings and recommendations together with the reasons for them. I think that is a very excellent point. The report will not rest with one Minister.

Heritage Railway Stations

The Minister of Transport is being brought into the picture as well.

Within 30 days after receipt of the report, the two Ministers shall transmit to Cabinet or the Governor in Council their recommendations along with a copy of the said report, the application for authorization, the estimated annual costs and the notice of objection. The two Ministers must reach a decision and then take that decision to Cabinet.

Cabinet may authorize the company to alter the station owned by it, or the company may be authorized to remove, destroy, sell, assign, transfer or otherwise dispose of the station. In other words, if they accept the application, the railway company has authority to go ahead and do what it wanted to do. If they do not accept it, then of course it is given heritage designation. The authorization required by the company is in addition to any and all authorization and any other legislation. There will be nothing slipshod about it. It will be thoroughly reviewed.

That is the gist of the Bill which I thought I should outline to Hon. Members of the House. The Bill will actually provide efficient mechanisms which allow concerned citizens to make timely objections to the destruction, removal or sale of stations of historic or cultural value to ensure their conservation in the public interest.

The reason I was interested in this Bill—and I suppose it is the same reason the former Hon. Member for Parkdale-High Park was interested—is that too many of these stations are being destroyed. I can think of a station in my own City of Drumheller, on the banks of the Red Deer River, in the Valley of the Dinosaurs. CNR moved out and without saying a word to city council suddenly one day destroyed the whole station. It was an historic monument of that city. Thousands of people went through that station. As a matter of fact, the unique part of that station was that if one was going east; one would get on a train going west, and if one was going west, one would get on a train going east, because the line wound through that beautiful valley.

How many other stations have been destroyed? Perhaps we will never know. Scores of stations were built in another era of Canadian history, typical of their period. They tell people what it was like in the early days of the railways. They were built with public money and railway money, but they have become historic monuments. They are relics of a particular era. In my view they should not be destroyed.

I know of another station in the Town of Claresholm. The people of the area want to have it designated a heritage station and used as a museum. They are fixing up the grounds around it. This Bill will be welcomed by them.

Things have happened in terms of a number of stations as a result of co-operation on the part of one of the two railway companies. For example, in the town of Okotoks its station was made into a meeting place and a place for the arts, for drama and painting. The people of that area come there to paint and participate in other cultural activities. Drama is presented on the stage. It is also a meeting place. Recently I