

Railway Act

puzzle. They are responsible for one of the component parts of this puzzle and they are doing as good a job as we can expect them to do under the circumstances.

When business is good and traffic is heavy, the railroads make money. When business is bad and traffic is light, of course they appear to lose money and they do so. But I have found that they are willing, as are we, to look upon the matter from a long-term point of view; and if we can show them where the plans for the future will justify the extension of railways I am sure that they will be only too willing to accept their part of the responsibility. Where we are willing to put forth the money to extend railways into uneconomic territories, they will try to operate those railways as efficiently as possible. It is up to us here in parliament to decide where these railways will go and who will have to pay the bill. The C.N.R. is set up as a company but it is our company. If it loses money, we lose money. If it makes money, the whole country is better off.

To get even closer to the point of whether or not we should curtail services, may I say that we have a branch of the C.N.R. extending out of Edmonton to the east to the north of the Saskatchewan river, and it ends up in a village called Heinsburg. Another branch of the C.N.R. comes west through Saskatchewan and ends up at a place called Frenchman's Butte, 38 miles distant. This railway therefore has a gap of only 38 miles. If you want to carry farm machinery from Winnipeg to Heinsburg it is necessary to go by way of Edmonton, to shunt your box car and to take the box car back east a total extra distance of 328 miles. On the other hand, if you want to ship anything from Heinsburg to Winnipeg, you have to go west to Edmonton and back to Winnipeg. The people who live in there naturally feel that this is an unnecessary burden placed directly upon them and their personal exchequer. It is hard for them to see why a great railway system cannot close a 38 mile gap and give them what would obviously be far better rail services.

Looked upon from their point of view, there is no question that that gap should be closed. We have to decide whether, as a people, we are going to be able to give them that added facility regardless of the economic book balancing. A good many of these people went in there on the expressed promise of the then government that these facilities would be given to them. The vision of the development of the northwest—

Mr. Herridge: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have listened with a great deal of interest to the hon. member. During

[Mr. Bigg.]

that period in which I was listening I was thinking that he would finally come to relate his remarks to this bill. However, I should like to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the remarks of the hon. member so far are not related to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rea): I want to thank the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) for bringing the matter to my attention. I have been listening and perhaps I was a little bit lax in the discharge of my duties in not drawing the matter to the attention of the house earlier. I should like to make this point. In the explanatory note in connection with the bill, near the bottom of it, we find this sentence:

The purpose of the proposed amendment is to provide that the board may, at the request of an interested municipality, deal with such reduction of service.

That is the bill or the amendment we are discussing. I hope hon. members will try to keep themselves within the amendment contained in this bill in order that I shall not be obliged to call the matter to their attention again.

Mr. Winch: This is not a railway extension bill.

Mr. Bigg: Mr. Speaker, I shall try to relate my remarks more closely to the spirit of this bill. It has been suggested that this railway should not only be extended but that the service on this line be cut out entirely. I think it is hard to discuss the cutting out of the service on this line without going into some of the history behind the line itself. With a view to making the point, in order to strengthen the spirit of this proposal that this line should not only be continued but that there should be no thought at all of cutting it out on the ethical ground I have proposed. These people deserve this line and therefore no reduction in the service should be contemplated, because along this line we have a rich agricultural community; not only that, but underneath the soil are large deposits of salt—

Mr. Pickersgill: Oh, oh.

Mr. Bigg:—which would keep the world in table salt and salt to be used for all commercial purposes. The people of Athabasca, I might inform the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill) do not think this is a laughing matter. Underneath the soil around Heinsburg there is a vein of salt from 80 to 200 feet deep and they have a mill there which sends out seven box car loads of salt per day. I wonder if the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate is aware of those facts.