

Transportation

my friend, the hon. member for Wellington-Huron referred the other day, section 314C, which reads in part as follows:

In determining whether an uneconomic branch line or any segment thereof should be abandoned—

And then it continues on from there. I believe the new criteria set out in this new bill, C-231, should be the basis for any hearings in respect of the proposed closing of these two stations in my constituency. So far as the River John area is concerned, I have pointed out why the Canadian National Railways has made this move. May I say that I can see no reason for federal agencies such as the Atlantic Development Board and the area development agency of the Department of Industry attempting to assist areas like mine—which they are doing—when with these applications the railways will be allowed to move out of the area. The railways must remain in areas like these. The station in the village of Merigomish is on the main line through Cape Breton. I do not intend to go into the detail of what the Canadian National Railways has included in its application. That will be dealt with when the Board of Transport Commissioners sends its inspector to the area.

I hope to be present at the hearings so that I may be able to help the county council of Pictou, which is fighting to keep these stations, put forward the case. These stations are very important to small villages such as these. Again may I say that I am disappointed that the Canadian National Railways made this move instead of waiting until the present legislation has been passed. Undoubtedly the people from the various other areas as well as from Merigomish and River John, the inhabitants of that area, the county council and myself will be fighting against any closings.

As I already have pointed out, the railway is important to these areas. It is their lifeblood. These stations should not be closed. May I repeat to the minister that we will be looking forward to the report in respect of the study concerning the Atlantic area. We hope it will come in in March or at least early in this year. We hope also that legislation will be forthcoming which will prove that the maritimes are not forgotten. We also trust that any legislation which is brought forward will justify this action which is being taken now.

We do not wish to be discriminated against. We should like to have those rights which are truly ours. We will be watching for the new legislation to amend the Maritime Freight

[Mr. MacEwan.]

Rates Act, or whatever changes are to come before parliament. When this is brought forward we will examine it most closely.

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Chairman, I have a few remarks to make on this transportation bill. This is the first time since the debate started three weeks ago that I have taken the floor. I did not do so when the various clauses were studied in order to keep my remarks when clause 1 would come up, at which time we could then discuss the bill as a whole.

Mr. Chairman, a while ago I gave figures on the differences in the rates used in the Toronto area and in the city of Montreal. I should like to add a few more, which rates will illustrate somewhat the point I wish to discuss.

For instance, I have here the rates which apply to the transport of wheat, oats, grain and grain products shipped from various parts of the country to Montreal, Halifax, Saint John and Newfoundland. From Fort William and Port Arthur in Ontario to Halifax, a distance of 1694 miles, the rate is 54 cents per hundredweight, from the same points to Saint John, 1463 miles, 54 cents and to other points in Newfoundland; by ship from Halifax or Saint John, 54 cents per hundredweight. In other words, the rate is the same as that which applies to shipments being sent to Halifax.

On the other hand, when shipments are made from Fort William or Port Arthur, to Montreal, a distance of 995 miles, the rate increases to 66 cents per hundredweight. So there is a difference in the rates.

When it starts, for instance, from Sarnia, Toronto, Midland, Walkerville for shipment to Halifax, a distance of 1150 miles, the rate is 26 cents per hundredweight. From the same points to Saint John, New Brunswick, a distance of 1274 miles, the rate is 25 cents per hundredweight, the same as for Newfoundland.

However, if you ship something from Sarnia, Toronto, Walkerville to Montreal, a distance of only 530 miles, then the cost is almost twice as much, namely 48 cents per hundredweight.

Mr. Chairman, we do not object to that. I see no objection to there being such gaps or to subsidies being made to allow those products to reach the maritimes for one must not forget that the maritime provinces are poorer and that they need assistance. We are prepared to accept that, but I quoted these cases