

done. As Mr. Dempsey said, it only means one thing: it means big, big trouble for Canadian railways.

We are wondering why the Government wants to do it. The Canadian Industrial Transportation League has been following the testimony, advocating the passage of the Bill without amendment, urging us to speed up the process, and advocating the change. Obviously the league had the ear of the Minister much more than the workers and the companies. Here is what the league had to say about it:

The CITL believes that competitive joint line rates will only be used as an exceptional safeguard procedure for the following reasons: Imagine yourself a shipper who is local to one Canadian railway after Bill C-18 has become enacted. If you wished to apply for competitive line rates, you would have to go through a formal legal proceeding which might take several months, whereby the specific CLR which you would pay would be argued before the National Transportation Agency, as well as whether your designated routing was "cost effective" or to the "nearest" interchange, et cetera.

Once you have endured these additional legal expenses and delays to obtain your competitive line rate, the merchandise might be further delayed by a day or more per shipment due to the local railway's resistance in adjusting their work schedules for an hostile interchange with the competing railway which was obtaining the long haul.

I did not invent these words. These were the words submitted to us on April 3 by the Canadian Industrial Transportation League.

On one hand, the railways do not want it and, on the other hand, those who might benefit from it are saying that it is unworkable, too costly, and unproductive.

Why on earth is the Minister of Transport insisting upon bringing in legislation with measures that are not satisfactory to anyone? I submit that the Minister, who unfortunately has not been very studious, to say the least, about Bill C-18, did not know what he was doing and what he was pushing. I also believe that he has been badly influenced and misled by some of his officials in the Department of Transport who wanted to get at the railway companies. Again this is an aspect of the legislation which is terribly bad.

[*Translation*]

This policy, by substantially reducing the revenue of railroads, will provoke abandonment of many branch lines in Canada. I must say that, in this regard, both our railroad companies, that is the CNR and the Canadian Pacific, were very frank with the members of the parliamentary committee. When they appeared before us and were asked this question, they replied quite honestly that, in the case of the Canadian Pacific, over one third of existing lines would be abandoned. Even more, the CNR will abandon half its lines. There is no doubt that the railway companies have no other option than to abandon branch lines throughout Canada.

The Hon. Member for Jonquière—

Mr. Côté (Lac-Saint-Jean): The most beautiful riding in Canada!

Mr. Ouellet: The Hon. Member from Lac-Saint-Jean in Quebec says it is the most beautiful riding in Canada. Even though he interrupts me constantly—

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Mr. Robichaud: He thinks he is a Minister.

Mr. Ouellet:—he will probably pay attention to what I am about to tell him—

Mr. Côté (Lac-Saint-Jean): It will be the third time you say it.

Mr. Robichaud: Not at all. You are not listening.

Mr. Ouellet:—because the documents clearly show that the Canadian National in particular is about to abandon important services. I suggest to the Hon. Member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Côté) that he should take notes and have enough courage to take part in this debate later on, because the only thing he seems to be warming up right now is his backside, not his brain.

The Department of Transport in the province of Québec contemplates a whole string of actions to counter this now almost irrevocable decision by the CN. Indeed, according to the document made public by the Quebec Minister of Transport, Mr. Côté, many applications are anticipated from the CP for the abandonment of the following subdivisions, that is the Chaudière Line (Valley-Jonction to Lac-Frontière) and the Tring Line (Tring-Jonction to Courcelles). And as for the CP, Chandler Line (Sainte-Adélaïde to Gaspé), Taschereau Line (Cochrane to La Sarre and Miquelon to Chapais), in the Danville area, Charny to Plessisville Line, and in the Val-D'Or area, Senneterre to Rouyn Line are all at stake.

I recognize that the Hon. Member for Abitibi (Mr. St-Julien) has been the only Conservative member to make active and sound representations for the sake of his own region, so that Val-D'Or would not be deprived of its Senneterre to Rouyn line. And because of his representations, we have heard evidence from representatives in the Abitibi region who appeared before the Transport Committee in an effort to have some amendments made so as to protect concerned regions from those unilateral abandonments of railways by the CN.

Some colleagues in the Opposition are tempting me with a sandwich in order to make me conclude now. I feed myself with all those documents we have been handed in the transportation committee. They contain a wealth of good sense and ideas on how to amend this piece of legislation.

It is unfortunate that the Minister of Transport is not with us now. He did not show up often neither in the committee when we considered this bill. He could have found food for thought in all those briefs submitted by various people and we could have made use of them to make this bill acceptable. Unfortunately, because the Minister of Transport was so uncompromising, so eager to sabotage the transportation sector in Canada, none of those briefs have been considered and accepted. Now, the Department of Transport of Quebec is protesting against those abandonment orders at a time when the Federal Government itself admits that the present system is obsolete by proposing a reform of the corresponding economic regulations.