

railway to provide better service and overcome inadequacies. I realize that this comment may not be fair in some cases, but I think it must be noted that this attitude exists and must be taken into account by the proper authorities.

As I look at the application which has been filed by Canadian National Railways, to which I have referred, I notice there are a number of points which should be noted and about which many people will be concerned. First of all, it is noted that Saskatoon will become the master agency centre for all line points on a number of stated Saskatchewan area subdivisions. These include a number of points which are located in my constituency. These are sizeable communities such as Kelliher, Lestock and Punnichy, all of which have given the railway a good amount of patronage.

In addition to that, I note also that the Edmonton master agency will be extended to include the Wainwright, Doddsland, Porter and Bodo subdivisions. When we look at the points that are included in these subdivisions, we note that Doddsland includes Loverna and that the Porter subdivision includes Battleford and I believe a number of other points in Saskatchewan. These points in Saskatchewan are to be served by the Edmonton master agency.

I imagine such an organizational structure has been proposed because the operating sections of the railway are located in Edmonton for these particular stretches of railway line. But these points are in Saskatchewan. Most of them are more closely adjacent to Saskatoon and other Saskatchewan centres than to Edmonton. It seems to me that customer services provided to these centres and points, many of which are located in the constituency of my colleague the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson), should be provided into Saskatchewan and out of Saskatchewan points rather than from the city of Edmonton. This seems to be one of the faulty approaches that may be of concern to many people.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I also note that it is proposed to ask for authority to remove the station buildings from a large number of locations, including a number of locations along the CNR line with which I am familiar, such as Goodeve, Hubbard; then Kelliher, Lestock and Punnichy which are in my constituency and, farther on, the points of Quinton, Semans, Nokomis, Venn,

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Young, Zelma, Bradwell and Clavet as far as the city of Saskatoon and other points on the CNR line. Many of these are communities with anywhere from 500 to 1,000 people living in the urban centres and a much larger population living in the surrounding rural areas who use the particular centres as their shopping district. It seems to me that to remove the station buildings from these locations is a very questionable procedure which indicates that the railway does not any longer—intend to provide an adequate service to these points.

With respect to the Saskatchewan area subdivision, it is proposed that three mobile customer service supervisory positions be established to maintain personal contact at the line points where agents have been removed. I have no doubt that competent people will be obtained who can handle public relations and the business aspects of the operation in a very satisfactory manner. But I ask: Is it possible for three customer service supervisors to service the entire area under this master agency plan? I submit it is simply not possible to do so.

In saying this I wish to acknowledge that the role of the station agent of the past has changed. With the introduction of centralized traffic control there is no longer the same need for the telegraph operator function as it has been carried out in the past by many station agents. Thus, their duties are more restricted. Some reorganization can be justified and would probably be useful, but I question whether simply having these three supervisors will be adequate to serve the needs of the people along these railway lines if it is the intention to maintain an adequate level of service.

I suggest that the contacts with the local community of a number of people who are in fact working for the railway, who have a responsibility to the railway at a number of points along these lines, should be examined very closely because if they are not satisfactory they will only further weaken the railway service as we hope to see it in the future.

Of course there are alternatives. The railway company suggests that it will establish, on a seven-day per week basis, a 24 hours a day free telephone system for Saskatoon for all carload, express, passenger and telecommunications requirements. That sounds very good, and as a matter of fact it does hold some potential for improvement of service. I cannot say that I know of any examples on the CNR system wherever they have established a master agency plan such