

Railway Act

I have been continually amazed at the lack of realism shown by members of the opposition in this house in so far as railway operation is concerned. They are continually asking questions about men being laid off and requesting the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hees) to prevail on the management of the C.N.R. to maintain employment or to allow featherbedding to continue. They must be aware that the end results of these practices will be one of two things: either an ever-increasing burden on the taxpayers of Canada or the complete destruction of our export industries.

If the hon. member for Kootenay West would shed his mantle of socialism that he has on in the house and would return to his true role of lumber operator in the Kootenays he should be the first one to realize that what he has recommended could very well destroy the lumber industry in the Kootenays.

Mr. Winch: Are you mad?

Mr. Herridge: May I ask the hon. member a question? Does the hon. gentleman realize that the whole lumber industry in my district is behind the protest against the curtailment of this service and supports the amendment in this bill which was drafted as a result of receiving the advice of good counsel?

Mr. McQuillan: Having had a good deal of experience with lumber men, I realize that there are a great many narrow-minded, local-minded lumber men.

Mr. R. H. Small (Danforth): In talking on this question, the matter of whether this is properly before the house was raised by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hees). He pointed out, and rightly so, in support of his position, section 315 of the Railway Act. Then he went a little further and buttressed his position by saying sections 33 and 36 were to the effect that the Railway Act requires railway companies to receive, carry and deliver traffic and provide adequate and suitable accommodation for the carrying of traffic and the regulation of train services, and requires the railway companies to furnish adequate and suitable train services and prohibits them from reducing services below that standard.

While the hon. member from Kootenay may not be wholly in order, I think he is taking advantage of this opportunity to bring to the attention of the house the complaint in his own particular riding. I think that is as it should be. I am also going to take the opportunity, under this section of the act, more or less to buttress his position or support it, even though it may not be properly before the house.

I am taking this opportunity because in 1956 I spoke of the inadequate service that was being given to the largest cities in the Dominion of Canada and in the ambit or the scope of the cities that were being talked about, Toronto was included. I was complaining about the attitude of some of the officers of the Canadian National Railways when they were talking about the complaint that had been lodged by the city of Toronto, particularly the suburban areas. At that time the complaint was coming from Oakville and Scarborough that there was inadequate commuter service to Toronto for the purpose of bringing the vast population to their work each day. The president of the Canadian National Railways brought in the argument that if we wanted that kind of service, we would have to pay for it. Then I went over the matter, as has been done by the hon. member for Kootenay West, relating what had happened in the past.

I can subscribe to what the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) has said when he went over the details of why the railways were not paying and where they had been subsidized in the past. It is a good thing to bring these matters to the attention of the house because it is the only opportunity that we have of getting these views before the people of Canada who, in turn, are paying for and subsidizing the railways when there is a deficit. Likewise, when there is a surplus, the railways do not do much to improve the services. Likewise, I pointed out that in reporting, they made a great point with regard to inter-city service, saying that they had speeded it up and that they had improved the time and therefore though they had not increased the services, they were running a profitable venture between the cities. I pointed out to them then that, as to the commuter service that was given in Toronto they had never at any time endeavoured to give the service and to see whether it would pay or whether, if they gave good service, the people would be glad to support it even if they increased the rates.

At the time the board of trade of Toronto supported the board of transport commissioners in granting an increase in the rates for commuter service. The point is that it was never questioned by the people in the suburban sections of Toronto or of the metropolitan area, I should say, as to whether they would pay or complain about paying if they were given the service for which they were asking. The point I wanted to mention was that a vice president, I think it was Mr. Tile, had stated that the service had become so deficient that they could not now, even if they wanted to, give a better service for people in the suburbs.