

*Government Orders*

House that the answer is no, it ought not to be treated differently.

For the record, because I do not believe in pretending there was no objection, there was an objection to this bill, a fairly strenuous objection to this bill. It was made by the executive secretary of the Canadian Railway Labour Association, Mr. Ed Abbott. He indicated the association was in the middle of a discussion regarding jurisdiction by the union for that railway. Mr. Abbott has done exactly as any union representative should do. He has looked initially at the position of the employees of the railway and their rights. He has been determined to ensure that their rights are maintained and their jobs preserved. That is the job that any union should do, and that was the initial focus point for Mr. Abbott's interjection with respect to Bill C-5.

Members can say, notwithstanding the valid objection by Mr. Abbott, that we are satisfied. We have heard firsthand from a representative of all of the employees that the employees in question support Bill C-5. The workers believe, and say so unanimously, that they now have a very constructive working relationship with the Central Western Railway. They believe the unique and small nature of this company with such a small number of employees is conducive to a positive working environment. More important, for Canadians generally, the safety record and standards of this company are indeed good and have been maintained.

It is worth pointing out to Canadians who are wondering about the evolution of short line railways that at least in the case of this railway, without prejudging what may happen in the future, this company has pumped a very substantial amount of its revenues in the few years it has been in operation into upgrading the line. It bought the line from one of the two giants of Canada and it has spent millions upgrading that line in a short period of time. In fact, as much as 35 per cent or 40 per cent of the revenues of the company have been immediately pumped back into ensuring safety and improving safety. That backdrop is important.

• (1020)

Members of the committee have heard from the employees. I might add that the employees were unanimous in wanting this bill passed. It is in their interest, in the interest of the company, and in the interest of the region the company serves, the short line route. We have also heard from the village of Donalda, from the village of Big Valley, from the county of Camrose, and from many other communities and farmers served, and happily so, by this short line railway. They would like to see Bill C-5 passed to allow this railway to continue its work, to clarify the question of disputed jurisdiction quickly, and to allow it to grow and build.

It is worth pointing out and acknowledging as well that we initially had some union representation, and we understand that representation. Not only are the employees satisfied, not only are the communities affected satisfied with the operation of this railway, but I received a copy of a letter from Mr. Gordon Wright, member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta—and I am not used to promoting New Democratic members of legislative assemblies—who is as aware as I am and who has written an excellent letter.

Like many of us, he well understands the prerogative of the union to represent its employees. Like many of us, he is sensitive to the right of the unions to intervene in these types of circumstances. Also, like many of us, he has judged this case on its merits. He has read no more into Bill C-5 than there is and no less, and he has come to a conclusion. We can understand the sensitive position he is in as a member of the New Democratic Party that in fact the swift passage of Bill C-5 is an appropriate act for Parliament to undertake. I will not quote from the letter.

We in this party support Bill C-5. We want to take an opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Tom Payne, President of the Central Western Railway who is truly an example for all of those doubting Thomases across Canada that Parliament can work from time to time. Mr. Payne has single-handedly come to Ottawa, single-handedly made his case to all three caucuses, all three parties, without the help of high priced lobbyists, without the help of high priced lawyers, without the help of political opportunists. He has appealed to the inherent—occasionally it is there—common sense of members of Parliament. His