

Railway Act

speakers. As you know, Mr. Chairman, I usually look at things from a nation-wide point of view, but if you will excuse me this afternoon I will become somewhat parochial for a change. The Secretary of State is laughing; I am not sure whether he takes me seriously.

This legislation is good legislation, and it has been of great advantage to many parts of the country. However, with the increasing population and the consequent increase in traffic, and the increasing development of roads where there is no great density of population, the pace is too slow. That is the only criticism I have to make of this legislation.

I happen to represent a mountainous region, and many of our people are very interested in the grade crossing situation. First of all we have the problem that is presented in areas where there is density of population, and owing to the nature of the country we also have dozens of very dangerous railway crossings elsewhere. There are many places where there is a blind cut approach with a steep grade up to 10 per cent and an acute curve all at the one crossing. Possibly at such points there will be only light car traffic during the day and two or three school buses taking children to school and bringing them home.

We have had some serious accidents and a lot of near accidents. Under certain weather conditions, such as a blinding snowstorm, it is impossible to see or hear a train coming, and the engineer is in the same position with regard to seeing a car or bus. Apparently this problem is somewhat general. I have listened to the remarks of a number of members who have indicated that the problem of railway crossings in the less densely populated areas is serious. I want to join them in urging further consideration of this particular aspect of the railway crossing problem.

I suggest that in co-operation with the provinces a complete survey should be made of all railroad crossings that present any particular danger at all, whether they are in densely populated areas or in rural areas where traffic is light. Then an order of priorities should be established for dealing with these crossings in a particular manner. The more expensive could be dealt with first, and so on.

Previous speakers have suggested that some research should be undertaken looking for a cheap form of warning device or something of that sort for such railroad crossings, and I support them in this suggestion. We know it is impossible to ask for underpasses or overpasses in many circumstances, but surely devices could be obtained as a result of research that would greatly reduce the hazard.

[Mr. Herridge.]

Third, until these crossings in rural areas are properly protected I suggest it might be possible to consider changes in railroad rules. I am thinking of one mountain valley in my constituency. Freight trains heavily loaded with lumber and travelling at a fairly good speed pass one blind crossing after another some 10 miles apart. Where a train is hauling a load of lumber 30 miles to the famous Kettle valley railroad I think under such circumstances time is not a factor, and a few minutes means very little. Possibly some consideration should be given to changes in the railroad rules to bring about a reduction in train speed until something is done to protect these crossings.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, in order to meet the present need even with low cost devices, both in densely populated areas and in rural areas, more funds are going to be required than will be available under the bill to come before us after the resolution is passed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Latulippe: Mr. Chairman, I would be angry with myself for not calling the attention of the Minister of Transport (Mr. McIlraith) to the many disadvantages of grade crossings in the riding I have the honour of representing. Several of these grade crossings have no signals.

As a matter of fact, in an accident last summer at a grade crossing in a municipality near Megantic, namely Nantes, five members of the same family were killed and two others injured.

As far as the town of Megantic is concerned, there are six grade crossings in a distance of three miles. C.N.R. tracks cross the national highway at six different places. Three of these grade crossings have signal systems.

At two other level crossings right in the heart of the town, no signal can be seen.

In the centre of the town of Megantic, there are ten, 12 and even 15 accidents each year in which vehicles are practically demolished; fortunately there is no great loss of life—a few only over several years—because the train slows down when coming to that spot, but many vehicles suffered considerable damage, of which the owners must bear the cost, because the railway is never wrong.

A few years ago the board of transport commissioners were asked, on several occasions, to eliminate all those level crossings. The records must be quite bulky, because the minister told me the other day that it was practically impossible to supply them and gave me permission to examine them at the board of transport commissioners' office.