

*Railway Act*

However, I do not think we can always assess our national effort in terms of dollars and cents or, what you might call "paying lines". We certainly cannot look at the results on a mere day to day basis. It is not of much help to look back, either. Some lines have been built where they should not have been built, and some lines should have been built which have not been built. We must not neglect the long-term view. I agree that we must balance our books, in the short-term view, but my fear is that in doing so we may be overlooking the most important thing of all and that is the solid economic future of our country.

If we plan with the same forethought as our ancestors, I feel we will achieve the same results. When we build these railways into the north we have to be bold but we also have to be careful to make sure we do not waste the taxpayer's money. We have to attempt to strike a balance between sound economic principles and dreams. I do not think the development of the north country is any idle dream. I have been there, and I have seen some of the potential.

In Athabasca, just north of McMurray, there is one of the greatest oil deposits in the world. It is true that this oil is trapped in sand and we are only now reaching the point where this oil can be freed from the sand by an economic process. Nevertheless there is no doubt that, given time, this process will become economically feasible. According to conservative estimates there are 200 billion barrels of oil trapped in these sands. It does not take a great deal of imagination to realize that if our supply of oil from the Near East, from Venezuela or any other place were to be cut off, the tar sands of Alberta would become not only of national but international importance. Whether or not the building of a railway into that section would speed up that process, I am not sure. However, I know that if the tar sands are developed a rail linkage will be required.

This railway to McMurray already carries the great bulk of the freight going into the north. As I said before, according to the books it is making money. If we extend these facilities farther north I think they will also contribute to the solid development of Canada. This railway at McMurray is the closest rail line in Alberta to the Canadian shield. The mineral resources of that shield have only been scratched. People who are conversant with railroads know that mineral areas are considered to be one of the finest sources of revenue for railroads. If we are only looking at the dollars and cents angle

then railroads which are built to mining areas are the railroads which pay.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is not the attitude of this member, nor is it the attitude of the members of this government to take a parochial or even a provincial view. If there are places to which this particular railway should go in order that the country will be better serviced, I would be one of the first to give the matter consideration. The final decision will not be mine. But when the final decision is made I shall have made all the attempts possible to present the government of this country with impartial facts on which they can make a decision where to place this railroad for the greatest good of the people of this country.

In case my questioner from British Columbia asks me what this has to do with curtailment of railroad services, I must say that we cannot be sure that any railroad will pay for a long period of time or that it will pay better than the building of adequate roads. In the whole of Athabasca we have 24 miles of hard-surfaced roads. Today hard-surfaced roads are essential. Hard-surfaced roads are very effective for increasing the economic welfare of any community. When I say that we need many miles of hard-surfaced roads I do not mean that we do not need a railway. However, it is possible that the expenditure of money on hard-surfaced roads would be more economically sound at this time. That we shall need a railway into the north country to carry minerals in the future, I have no doubt. But whether we build it this year, in five years' time or in 25 years' time is something that will depend on the economic necessity. I do not know what is going to happen to the price of base metals. If the price of base metals went up rapidly, great impetus would be given to the immediate development of these projects.

I merely want to point out that the curtailment of services or the expansion of services on the railway today is something which requires a great deal of thought and a great deal of planning. Since coming to Ottawa I have taken certain steps to look into these matters and I have found on the part of the railways a spirit of co-operation which surprised me. I found that they are very careful indeed in assessing all the factors, although I also found that they were hard-headed businessmen, that they liked to see books balanced and liked to see a good yearly report. Amongst these men I found capable engineers and men of vision who look upon the railway problem as just another national problem. They look upon it—as one of the members of the opposition said the other day—as part of a great jigsaw