

was not required to be given by a railway unless it was intending to construct a branch line.

Since this bill concerns only subsection (4) of section 119 of the Railway Act, I was interested in seeing, first, what section 119 deals with. As we do not see many amendments to this statute I will read subsection (1), which is the operative part of section 119. It reads as follows:

If any deviation, change or alteration is required by the company to be made in the railway, or any portion thereof, as already constructed, or as merely located and sanctioned, a plan, profile and book of reference of the portion of such railway proposed to be changed, showing the deviation, change or alteration proposed to be made, shall, in like manner as hereinbefore provided with respect to the original plan, profile and book of reference, be submitted for the approval of the Commission, and may be sanctioned by the Commission.

It is easy to see that it could be a time-consuming and expensive proposition for the railway to make such a plan, profile and book of reference. These are documents which require time and expert knowledge in order to be made and assembled. Consequently, subsection (4), which is amended by this bill, provided that the commission could dispense with such requirements in certain cases. So, since public notice was not required considerable alterations could be made, or at least commenced, by the railway before the public was aware such changes were contemplated. And such changes could have a very poor effect upon persons living in the vicinity.

It is interesting to note that the wording, though not the substance, of the bill was changed when it was considered by the Transport and Communications Committee of the House of Commons. The original bill, introduced on October 22, 1976, added to subsection (4) the words "or if such deviation, change or alteration does not in any way decrease the use or enjoyment that residents in the immediate vicinity of the railway may make or have of their residences." This wording was so vague and imprecise that it would be practically impossible to give it a judicial interpretation. The added subsection (4.1) then dealt with notice.

The amended bill clarifies the matter. It retains subsection (4) as it is in the present act, but it changes subsection (4.1) and adds subsection (4.2). It drops the wording "or if such deviation, change or alteration does not in any way decrease the use of enjoyment that residents in the immediate vicinity of the railway may make or have of their residences." Subsection (4.1) compels a railway to give public notice of a proposed change if a residential, commercial or public building is within 1,000 feet of the proposed change. Subsection (4.2) deals with the notice, and also authorizes the commission to dispense with or to shorten the time for such notice to be given if it deems it proper to do so. The bill as amended is an improvement over the original. It is worthy of support, and I do support it. Since its effect is clear I do not believe any useful purpose would be served in sending it to a committee for further study.

Honourable senators, since we are dealing with an amendment to the Railway Act, may I digress for a moment to mention another railway matter?

On Thursday last the government leader tabled a document entitled "Atlantic Provinces Transportation Program." I expect legislation concerning this will be introduced in due course so that there will be opportunity for full debate. It is an incredible document. Apparently, the Atlantic premiers agreed with the Minister of Transport at a meeting on February 27 last that the railway passenger service in the Atlantic region should be reduced to one daily train from Halifax to Montreal.

Personally, I find it incomprehensible that the Government of Nova Scotia would agree to eliminate rail passenger service between Sydney and Halifax. To my mind, that shows a shocking disregard for the interests of the people of Cape Breton—a disregard which is reprehensible in the extreme and impossible to understand. Moreover, the document calmly assumes that the hearings of the CTC on rail passenger service will recommend the elimination of all but one passenger train. Since the agreement was reached in February and the hearings by the Canadian Transport Commission commenced on May 17, one can only conclude that these hearings are nothing but window dressing, a publicity stunt, which can only lead to a complete lack of confidence in the CTC.

Honourable senators, I thank you for your indulgence. I will speak on this matter at greater length and condemn it more vigorously when the legislation comes before us.

Motion agreed to and bill read second time.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tem*: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

Senator Petten moved that the bill be placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting.

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL UNITY

REGIONAL ASPIRATIONS—DEBATE CONTINUED

The Senate resumed from Thursday, May 26, the debate on the inquiry of Senator Perrault, calling the attention of the Senate to the question of meeting more effectively the economic and cultural aspirations of the various regions of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ernest G. Côtteau: Honourable senators, first I would like to commend the government Senate leader for raising on May 17, 1977, the inquiry on the issue of national unity, in terms that lend themselves beautifully to this day's discussion, offering at the same time a range of alternate choices of interest to the various regions in Canada. It presents the opportunity, and I quote:

Of meeting more effectively the economic and cultural aspirations of the various regions of Canada.

I also commend the honourable senators who have already taken part in this debate.