

Safe Containers Act

This is something which is happening all across the country. I would plead with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) to use whatever authority he has with the board of transport commissioners to ensure that it will try to prevent accidents from occurring by foreseeing the possible causes. Again, I emphasize that nobody is asking for the relocation of every rail line across this country, but just that when these lines are relocated they be put in a safe place where any errors will not endanger human life.

There are some other points with regard to this bill which I feel are very important. I hope to raise them before the committee if at all possible.

Mr. Douglas Fisher (Mississauga North): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to be talking on this bill today and on the other bill which we are currently dealing with in committee, the transportation of dangerous goods bill. Coming as I do from Mississauga, these are topics which affect us and with which we have had some experience. I am quite interested in the passage of these bills and very encouraged by their provisions.

I have had the opportunity of listening to the officials of the department in committee. This particular bill deals with the standards concerning containers as they affect the transport of goods across international boundaries. I am pleased that we have been able to increase the quality of our standards through the ratification of this international convention.

In Mississauga we found that the containers themselves were a vital part of the accident. Double-walled train cars did not explode, despite the fact that they were subject to enormous stress and enormous heat in that accident.

It would probably help hon. members present if they knew exactly what went on in that accident. As the train began to go off the track, an explosion occurred instantaneously. Within a minute, a second explosion occurred sending a ball of fire 40 storeys high. A similar explosion occurred within an hour. The end of one of the train cars blew off and the car travelled along the ground 2,200 feet, shooting fire out of its back. Throughout the following week as the propane and chlorine burned, one tank car sat in the middle of the debris and the heat without exploding or leaking. At the end of the week a truck emptied out the liquid inside the car, and the fire department determined that it was a double-walled tanker car. Other double-walled cars experienced fractures and slow leaks, but none exploded.

I was most encouraged to hear from the minister's officials while in committee that railroads are now phasing in the use of this type of car. I am further encouraged by the fact that the railroads, truck carriers and air carriers will be forced to face increased responsibility for inspection. They will be required to justify much more firmly their behaviour when such accidents occur.

I am concerned over the fact that the Canadian Pacific Railway does not want to take on that kind of responsibility, as was stated by its representatives before the Grange inquiry in Mississauga. Basically, the railroad is running the same train

through Mississauga every night as it was running last fall. The railroad's officials have said repeatedly to Mr. Justice Grange that they have not changed their procedures and that they do not intend to do so.

I asked the fire chief of Mississauga about the ramifications of the decision of CPR. He indicated that any individual living within 2,500 feet of either side of the CPR line was vulnerable in the event of another accident. In Mississauga 40,000 people live that close to that track. I encourage the CPR to take its responsibilities more seriously and to begin to introduce some fundamental and inexpensive safety procedures in the operations of its trains. I refer to such procedures as hot-box detectors, rear view mirrors and slower inspection procedures.

I am encouraged to see in this new legislation that more responsibility is being placed on the carrier in the area of inspection. I hope that the railroad in Mississauga will not wait until this legislation is passed before it takes up its responsibility.

Those are the points which I wanted to raise with regard to this legislation. We were very fortunate in Mississauga. We went through not one miracle but two miracles. The first miracle happened in the first minute of the accident when the train went off the track into an empty field. There were only industrial buildings within 2,500 feet of that field. There were no homes nor congested construction going on. There were plenty of fire hydrants and open roads for access by the rescue and prevention equipment. That was the first miracle.

The second miracle was that out of the 250,000 people evacuated, nobody was hurt. The crime rate in the area actually dropped. We owe a great deal to many local officials, such as the mayor, the fire department and the police department, for their diligent efforts during that week. Had they been armed with some of the provisions in the new regulations under this legislation, they would have been able to perform their duties even more easily.

● (1450)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

Mr. Collenette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the clerk said and I am sorry that there is some confusion this afternoon. All hon. members have co-operated and now we are desperately trying to find out what will be the next item of business before four o'clock. It was our intention to go on with Bill S-6, to amend the Two-Price Wheat Act. I have been trying to locate the former postmaster general so that we could deal with Bill S-4. I do not know the propriety of asking for a couple of moments' grace in order to speak to him. Perhaps the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would comment on the propriety of this. If we do move to Bill S-4 I believe that there may be a disposition to pass it. We could then move to Bill S-6 and that would take us to four o'clock.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, rather than commenting on the proprieties, may I comment on the probabilities. If the hon.