

a feeling that it should be there to take care of their interests as well as the interests of the customers of the railways and the railways themselves. There has been concern that perhaps the CTC has not been doing that effectively.

I believe that perception has not been without some degree of validity, but I think that is changing. As a result of a private member's bill which I managed to get through the House recently, I find that the CTC is now prepared to come out to the public, as it were, and hold public meetings in areas where there are problems. I want to commend the railway transport committee for initiating that kind of action last year. When a subsequent problem arose in my area the railway transport committee came to the borough of Scarborough and held a public meeting. When the local residents were not satisfied with the notices they were given concerning that meeting, another meeting was held. The second meeting was widely advertised. At the meeting the committee listened carefully and attentively to all the comments made by local residents. It was a formal meeting, and subsequent to it the Railway Transport committee issued its findings and insisted that the railways do certain things. What was involved was a temporary relocation of track. The committee insisted that the railways conform to certain requirements, and I know that tended to placate the concerns of the residents.

I think the CTC and the railway transport committee, which is a segment of the CTC, are endeavouring more and more to listen to people. Through submissions made by members of this House, including the excellent submission put forward through this private member's bill in the name of the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville, I think they will do more listening. I think it is up to us as members of this House to continue to bring these problems forward.

The railways are a tremendously important part of our economy. In years gone by they were considered to be so important that perhaps the ordinary citizen should not have involved himself too much in what was going on, even if there were problems in local areas.

This is a thing which has to be turned around. The railways must realize that not only are they responsible to their customers and for keeping the economy of this country functioning, but they also have a responsibility to communities where their railway facilities enter and pass.

● (1742)

I know the problem which the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville is facing. I think it is a little unfortunate. I believe that because the CTC has rules in this matter in favour of the local people and against the railways, if I am correct, the railways were anxious to bring the matter up again and the CTC held another hearing. I believe the appeal process should provide for either side to do that. I really think the CTC should be as responsive to the local groups in urban areas as it is to the railways.

The other point I would like to make—and now I will move away from the concerns of citizens relating to the reopening of facilities that have been dormant for years—relates to the

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whole matter of grade separations. I see the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell) in the House now and I know he shares my concern in that regard because there are many crossings in our two ridings on the main Canadian National line which runs between Toronto and Montreal. I do not know whether there is a more heavily traversed line in Canada than that line. There are crossings in the borough of Scarborough, which has a population of 375,000 people, which as yet do not have grade separations. This is a really dangerous situation. Every day there are hundreds of thousands of motorists crossing these level crossings and in each instance the exposure factor is very serious. I hope that the Canadian Transport Commission will continue to put more pressure on the railways to initiate the installation of grade separations as well as better signalling equipment.

I have noticed that as a result of actions taken by the hon. member for Scarborough East and myself of recent years, there has been an improvement in our borough in the quality of safety measures at those level crossings over the last few years, and it is noticeable. I do not know whether this is strictly a coincidence or because the railways and the CTC are starting to feel some pressure. If that is the case, it is all to the good because what we want is what is best for the communities involved; and in the long term what is in their best interest is also in the best interest of the railways themselves.

● (1752)

### *[Translation]*

**Mr. Charles Lapointe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, the bill introduced by my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan) is essentially quite important, in the sense that it gives rise to a problem faced by his constituents and also raises a much broader issue, that is the place of a citizen as an individual and the place of a citizen as a member of a pressure group and, the means available to him to challenge a decision made by federal boards endowed with quasi-judicial powers. This is a very important problem and I would like to thank and congratulate the hon. member for having introduced a bill which allows us to discuss however, briefly the much broader issue of the citizen's representativity before quasi-judicial boards as mentioned earlier.

A very important problem evidently arises if such commissions, as in the case of the CTC, can constantly reconsider their own decisions and if a transport company can put forward any reason, which may be more or less different from those invoked before, if a commission can and must reconsider or reexamine the issue or the decision it made. Of course, Mr. Speaker, this subjects pressure groups, whether citizens' committees or individuals, to financial and administrative burdens, and is quite time consuming, and I think it is the same for the CRTC and other federal commissions, who must implement certain policies of the federal government.