

Railway Act

most interesting visit to Iran and the city of Teheran, the capital of that country, where we were attending the annual meeting of the Interparliamentary Union. There we took part, with the Canadian delegation, in the deliberations with delegates from 63 other countries over the period of a week or so. One of the things that was most noticeable to Canadians visiting that country and city was that they do not have available the statistical tools that are available to Canadians, with which we are very familiar in our daily working in this house and with which Canadians in commerce everywhere are so familiar.

In that country you cannot get a mortality rate, you cannot get a birth rate, you cannot get any statistics in regard to the G.N.P. There really is no logical body of statistics in that land. This is characteristic of developing countries, namely that they do not have statistics to use as tools for economic analysis or for day to day use in a modern country such as Canada.

One of the ways in which we have acquired these tools is by keeping faith with the companies from whom we collect statistics. These companies have learned that when they give a body of statistics to a government agency such as the Board of Transport Commissioners for analysis, which statistics if they were given to the public at large would be used by their competitors, we will keep faith with them and the statistics will be used in a proper fashion and not against them by their competitors in industry. The companies have no reservations about filing these returns with the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and other government agencies which collect statistics in Canada because they know we will keep faith with them in this regard.

In the gathering of statistical information we have obtained an enormously valuable tool for research into the economic growth of the country whenever we require to have such information available. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I say it would be an improper thing for us to take this section of the Railway Act and expand it into achieving some other purpose than the very simple purpose for which it was intended, namely the collecting of statistics for the benefit of the country at large.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take part in this debate; it is a little refreshing to do so after the long discussion we have had on medicare.

[Mr. Deachman.]

First of all I want to say without any reservation whatsoever that I back the bill presented by the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond (Mr. Prittie). I think it is a good bill.

I support the hon. member's bill on one main basis. I say this in answer to the argument presented by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman). I say that the railways are in an entirely different situation than other companies. There are only two major railway companies in Canada, although there are several small companies. It has been said that this nation is being held together by its transportation system. When we consider the way this nation has been going lately, especially under this government, and see that we are beginning to divide into regions, one region against another, and the country is falling apart, I am sure that many of us are very thankful that at least we have a transportation system that holds us together.

The railways in Canada, particularly the C.P.R. have a virtual monopoly on railroading in certain sections of the country. I support this bill because other railway companies would have to appear before a standing committee of the House of Commons, the same as the C.N.R. does, to answer questions on their operations. I believe this should happen, because in the province of Alberta, from which I come, the railway has a virtual monopoly in the southern part of the province. Calgary is a C.P.R. city. When you travel south of Calgary you find that all the lines that serve the agricultural enterprises are owned by the railroads. There must be a reason for this. It is true that we have had our largest grain sales ever under both Liberal and Conservative governments. In this regard they are both to be congratulated. But these sales would have been even bigger in 1964, 1965 and 1966 if we had had a better transportation system.

The minister tells us that the government are doing everything possible to move the maximum amount of grain from the country elevators to the ports from where it can be exported.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Now we know that the government dilly-dallied with reference to strikes which caused us to be unable to deliver the grain according to the contracts of sale. However, one of the major problems also is that the ports in Vancouver, through which much of our grain goes to the Far East, are not sufficiently