

Railway Act

the level crossing to be found on the seventh range of the parish of St. Germain de Grantham.

The provincial department of highways has recently improved the highway between the two important towns of Wickam and St. Germain. As time goes by, traffic is getting increasingly heavier over there.

I should like to renew a request I made to the minister on November 5, so that delays may be reduced to a minimum in order to provide adequate protection to the constituents of St. Hyancinthe-Bagot in particular and to the travelling public in general.

Let us not wait until further tragedies happen before taking prompt action. Let us instead apply the saying that prevention is better than cure.

I am quite aware of the minister's dispositions and I am assured of his full co-operation. Should he need further details, I would be very happy to send them to him.

[Text]

Mr. Olson: In commenting briefly on this subject, I should like to agree with the previous speaker that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The particular problem I have in mind arises because of the increasing number of school buses which use railway crossings on district and country roads where the volume of traffic is not sufficient to warrant the installation of block systems which cost from \$7,000 up.

I think it can be agreed that the 80 per cent contribution made by the federal government from this fund is generous enough, and that some responsibility should attach to the railways and to the local authorities themselves. However, the minister did not mention the maintenance of these block signalling devices. I know that in some cases such costs may run from \$200 to \$300 a year. Where they are installed on a district road the local authority has to pay the full amount, and the result is that they are not installed on a large number of these country roads where school buses have to cross the lines twice a day.

The hon. gentleman told us, I believe, that the board of transport commissioners had rejected the idea of a radio transmitter on the trains sending a signal which could be received in school buses. I do not disagree with what has been said in that respect, but maybe there is some other means by which protection could be provided. I think some research should be done, as was suggested by the hon. member for Timiskaming, in an effort to find some low cost device, some acceptable way of getting a signal to these school buses so they may be alerted to the fact that there is a train approaching the

crossing. I do not say I know now of any device which could be of use. It is possible that research could bring one to light.

Certainly the problem which arises because of the use of these country roads by school buses is increasing year by year, and its solution is made difficult by the fact that on some of these roads there is very little other traffic. Perhaps some system such as has been suggested, or indeed a different system entirely, could be introduced. A number of serious accidents have occurred on these little used roads, and I urge the minister to take this matter under advisement to see whether something cannot be done about it.

Mr. Crouse: Mr. Chairman, I wish to speak only briefly on the resolution, to commend the government for signifying its intent to amend the Railway Act to permit grants to be made from the grade crossing fund for a further period of three years from January 31, 1964. With the increase in highway traffic I would say that this type of legislation is almost a necessity. Undoubtedly it has resulted in the saving of many lives in the past and will undoubtedly save many lives in the future.

In my own constituency many beneficial changes have already been made throughout the county, but I should like to put this question to the minister. It has to do with the problem that arises when a level grade crossing within the limits of a town should be changed. I am thinking now of the town of Bridgewater, wherein lies a crossing that should be altered. To the best of my knowledge there has been some uncertainty about the authority that is responsible for implementing a change at this particular crossing. The railroad passes over the highway fairly close to the town limit sign. I should like the minister to clarify the legislation so that it will more clearly indicate the responsible people who must make the original representations to the government in order to have the crossing in question altered.

At the present time large numbers of school children travel daily along the highway between Bridgewater and the New Germany high school. There have already been a number of accidents, and although none have been serious I believe some changes should be made at this crossing. I have been informed they have not been made because there has been some misunderstanding with regard to the proper authority to whom representations should be made. I should like the minister to clarify that situation.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my wholehearted support of the principle of the legislation. I want to make a few comments in line with those made by previous