

Transportation

of moving this amendment if the minister will not accept the original amendment of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. member for Springfield can speak for himself, but I shall also try to speak for him. He suggested his amendment, I think, as a compromise. The government was not willing to accept the amendment of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle. I do not feel it would be proper, as a matter of public policy, to give this commission the power to direct the railways to lease or purchase each other's property, or to abandon lines they do not want to abandon. There is no objection to giving them the power to recommend, and there is no objection to imposing on them the duty of passing their recommendations on to the governor in council, and action being taken by parliament if the governor in council has no power to take action. That, I think, would accomplish substantially everything the hon. member for Qu'Appelle suggests would be desirable, without giving arbitrary powers over property to the commission which, by its nature, is to be independent and not responsible therefore to parliament.

Mr. Schreyer: The minister has not misstated the intention of my suggestion. I sensed that he was not disposed to accepting the amendment of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle and I thought a change along the lines I suggested might go a long way toward meeting the objectives the hon. member for Qu'Appelle had in mind. I must say the amendment proposed just now by the minister goes a long way towards satisfying at least one requirement, that the commission shall report to the governor in council those recommendations made to the railways for rationalization and that, therefore, it is up to the governor in council or cabinet to take the proper and necessary steps to protect the public interest. This seems a welcome amendment.

● (8:30 p.m.)

Other things being equal I would have preferred the minister to accept the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle, but since he has not done so I can only say that this proposal certainly gives us some chance to salvage as much as possible.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): We have the minister's explanation on record. My hon. friend from Qu'Appelle evidently cannot be here this evening. Could we not stand over the vote on this until tomorrow? Perhaps I

misunderstood his intent, but it seems to me that the whole point of my hon. friend's amendment centred upon this question of direction, and the amendment, to my mind, has nothing to do with direction at all—it is simply the recommendation which is being continued, plus some other provisions. If we could defer the vote, my hon. friend from Qu'Appelle would have the opportunity of deciding whether or not he wishes to press his amendment.

Mr. Pickersgill: It would be preferable if the need to vote on this amendment did not arise. This is the difficulty in which I find myself: One hon. member after another has asked me to stand one clause after another for one reason or another, and I would very much like to reach a determination of some of these things at some stage. I do not want to be difficult, but if it is felt that all we are doing is waiting for the hon. member for Qu'Appelle to record one more vote in favour of his amendment, and that we are going to vote on it tomorrow, anyway, I would just as soon come to a vote tonight and have done with it. If on the other hand there is a reasonable chance that it will not be necessary to call a vote, and that the hon. member for Qu'Appelle, in the light of suggestions I have made in strengthening clause 3 materially in the direction he wishes to go, will not be inclined to press his proposal, then I would be happy to accede to the hon. member's suggestion.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): I do not want to place any restriction upon what the hon. member for Qu'Appelle may do. I repeat that I do not think this proposal by the minister achieves what he sought to do in his amendment, and this is why I ask that it stand over in order that he may have an opportunity to consider what has happened. I realize that it is not easy to consider all these amendments extensively, but they do deserve a lot of thought. The minister appreciates what is involved.

Mr. Pickersgill: I would have no objection if the committee is prepared to let this stand on the understanding that tomorrow, when we resume in committee, we will take up this clause first and reach a decision without, I hope, a prolonged debate. At least we have on record what I am prepared to do with respect to the suggestion made by the hon. member for Springfield.

Mr. Baldwin: Before we leave this subject, in order to offer the minister something as a