

Relocation of Railway Lines

The proposed new levels of federal assistance in Part III are as follows. First, level crossing protection work, 80 per cent of the cost of which may be paid from the grade crossing fund up to a new limit of \$1 million for new construction. The existing limit is \$500,000. Second, construction of, or improvement to, existing grade separations, 50 per cent of the cost of which may be paid from the grade crossing fund, up to a new ceiling of \$625,000. The existing limit is \$250,000.

Part II of the act provides special grants for very expensive grade separations and for new separations required by highway traffic rerouting schemes. For the very expensive grade separations there is an escalation scale of grants; for example, a grant of over \$2 million for a new separation costing \$3 million and a grant of about \$1.3 million for reconstruction of a grade separation costing \$3 million. New grade separations required by highway traffic rerouting schemes which are required to cross a railway line by means of a grade separation will qualify for special grants equal to 50 per cent of the construction costs.

This new railway relocation and crossing legislation deserves the support of this House. Its provisions have been carefully considered. It holds out major benefits in the reshaping of urban neighbourhoods. It pays renewed attention to the issue of public safety at railway and highway crossings and it will greatly extend the federal government's ability to assist in improving the urban environment in our nation.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Laniel in the Chair.

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. Shall clause 2 carry?

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Chairman, I might just speak to a point of order. I think we will be able to expedite the passage of the bill in committee of the whole. I might suggest that, on the clause now called, if any speaker is permitted to speak in respect of any clause on which he wishes to speak generally this might shorten the procedure when the bill is called clause by clause.

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. Hon. members have heard the suggestion of the hon. member for Calgary North. Is it agreed that while we consider clause 2 we will hear debate on all clauses?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Chairman, I might indicate that that is quite agreeable. The suggestion of the hon. member for Calgary North is a worthwhile one.

The Deputy Chairman: The Chair will act accordingly. On clause 2—*Definitions*.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Chairman, it is probably refreshing to some of us to return to what I suppose we were accustomed to under the former rules, which is to have an opportunity to discuss a bill such as this in the committee of the whole House. We have heard six speeches today. I might say at the outset that this party, in so far as the principle of the bill is concerned, supports it 100 per cent. The mayors and reeves who were down here met not only

[Mr. Guay (St. Boniface).]

with members of the government but also with members of our party, and I understand the New Democratic Party and the Social Credit Party. They presented certain briefs and came out strongly in support of a bill for relocation of railways so far as it affects urban centres.

I should like to make a few points in respect of the bill itself. As I said at the outset, we support the principle of the bill. We believe the federal government must move into this field, because it is very expensive to relocate railways, change tracks and improve urban centres, thereby enhancing the quality of life for those living in urban centres.

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It is now accepted, of course, that the railways fall directly under the jurisdiction of the federal government under our constitution. It seems to me that if the railways accept the responsibility laid down in the bill to make certain changes in agreement with the provinces and municipalities, then I sympathize with the minister in this regard. I think that one of the problems of any minister who is responsible for urban affairs is that he has to deal with three levels of government. Each level is jealous of its own powers and jurisdiction. Under Bill C-27, all three levels of government have some jurisdiction when it comes to making certain changes.

In this regard, what is most important is these conferences which I mentioned this week in a question which I put to the government. I referred to the tri-level conferences. In my opinion there should be at least two conferences a year of the three levels of government on matters relating to urban affairs. Some experts say that 66 per cent of the people live in urban centres. Actually, it would be more correct to say that 80 per cent of the population live in the large centres of Canada.

The minister in charge of housing, whether it be this minister or any other minister, must face the fact that three levels of government and three levels of bureaucracy are involved, and that he must obtain the acceptance of the municipality concerned, of the province, and finally of his own officials before any decision can be reached. The same applies to changes in railway tracks, if the minister decides that they should be taken out of the city so that the land may be used for other purposes. Each time he runs into the problem of having to deal with three levels of government and three levels of bureaucracy, which of course slows down the decision making process and sometimes makes it practically impossible.

I should like to digress for a moment to say that this is one of the great problems facing the minister, and that my sympathy is with him. In housing matters, the minister who represents the federal government finds that first a decision must be made at the city level, then at the provincial level, and finally at the federal level. The same is true of railway relocation.

We support this bill 100 per cent, although we may want to propose some amendments to it. In fact, I may support the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Scarborough West. However, one thing which I would like to emphasize—and I think the minister and every member of the House would agree with me—is that it is necessary to obtain the co-operation of the railroads. Every government