

*Transportation*

I must say that with this new change, stations are farther apart, but those that remain have to take a lot of orders. But once again the terminal traffic managers—

Mr. Chairman, I apologize if that copy is not very clear.

—and the others do not seem to be aware of it and they are burdened with clerical work, which makes the position of operator most dangerous.

I trust you will take my letter into consideration, that you will demand of the C.N.R. that it appoint qualified people to supervise operating agents and operators.

If you do not obtain that from the railways, we can then expect the worst slaughters.

It is signed:

From a former C.N.R. employee.

Mr. Chairman, I would be pleased to give the name and address to those concerned, if anyone is interested. But I put the letter on file, for it strikes me the accusation is warranted; it is serious and certainly deserves to be studied and looked into carefully.

Mr. Chairman, there may seem to be some disparity in the rest of my remarks, which I began to make last night, but as the order of procedure does not permit me to bring these matters to the attention of the government at other times, I take the opportunity to do so upon consideration of this bill.

Thus, I should like to make a remark concerning grade crossings, and I suggest that the new Canadian transport commission will have to review the grade crossings policy. I believe that municipalities are being required to pay a much larger share of the cost of construction of grade crossings than they can afford. Our Canadian municipalities are in a sort of financial strait jacket. They have about reached the limit of their investment capability and it seems to me, if railways want to go through our cities, that it is elementary that they should take care themselves of the costs incurred by such grade crossings it is intended to remove. I say grade crossings because that is what the act says, but they are eliminated mainly through the building of underpasses.

Mr. Chairman, I feel that it is unreasonable to ask the municipalities to assume part of the cost as they do now. Their share is exaggerated and prohibitive and should not be borne by the taxpayers but by the railway companies which must take steps to prevent accidents.

I would like to add that, under the present legislation, it takes far too long to secure the building of underpasses instead of grade

crossings. Unless I am mistaken, it takes three years of negotiations to get an underpass instead of a grade crossing. That is much too long, Mr. Chairman, and it should be recommended to the Board of Transport Commissioners—I hope it has the power to do something—to take steps so as to shorten the negotiations and to lower the cost of building underpasses to eliminate grade crossings.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to join with all my colleagues who expressed the wish that grade crossings will disappear throughout the country as soon as possible. On many occasions I helped people who had just been involved in grade crossing accidents and all hon. members should have the opportunity to see those dismembered bodies to become convinced that it is urgent to remove grade crossings, whatever it might cost. The human capital we would protect by eliminating those grade crossings is worth far more than the millions of dollars it will take to eliminate them. I think that the new Board of Transport Commissioners should be instructed to take the necessary steps to get rid of grade crossings.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I presume the new transport commission will have some responsibility regarding winter shipping on the St. Lawrence. I will not speak in the same tone as was heard here. I refuse to spread hate or myths. I would not want to claim for my riding or my province anything at the expense of the other provinces. I am not blaming the government for winter shipping conditions, because I have followed winter shipping ever since it began. I must say—and I am not saying this only about the government but also about its predecessor—that shipping conditions on the St. Lawrence in winter have improved over the years. I am speaking advisedly because, everything considered, the riding I represent, Trois-Rivières, probably benefits more than any other from winter shipping.

The progress made in this field over the years is commendable. I think that my colleague who, the other day, raised the matter in a tone that shocked the whole house and the whole country was not too familiar with the problem. If he had been aware of the facts, he would have known that ships, at this time of year, or even when the St. Lawrence is more open to navigation than it is now, would not venture to ply through the ice of the river unless it has a reinforced hull; this is elementary, and anyone knowing

[Mr. Mongrain.]