

*Railways*

● (1740)

I do not know of any municipality which has asked for this type of thing. If we want to save lives, let us put our efforts where they will be most effective. Many people are being killed at grade level crossings. In some cases we go part way but not very far. That is because the federal contribution toward an overpass or underpass is becoming less and less. The funding is being spread among many things, all of which may be useful, but does not help with the biggest hazard, level crossings. Lights and bells are not doing the job. They are mechanical, and people are still being killed.

While travelling with an engineer one day I noted that he stopped at the lights and bells because they were not working. He told me they only work 90 per cent of the time because they are mechanical, and not foolproof. Therefore, people are still being killed at crossings with that type of protection.

The Board of Transport Commissioners does not order lights and bells unless an application is made by the municipality. The onus is on the municipality. For many years the province of Alberta shared in capital costs. I understand that the installation of lights and bells today would cost between \$25,000 and \$30,000. Eight or ten years ago the cost was \$18,000. In fact, I have not checked recently so the cost may be even more than \$30,000. Many municipalities cannot afford such a cost. In addition, there is a maintenance problem. If we want to tackle the matter of saving lives, let us concentrate on the area where most people are being killed.

These costs should be shared. The municipality has the least money of any government, and it is closest to the people. The federal government does not have authority over municipalities. They are the creation of the provinces. We are dealing with legislation involving the municipalities without their consent. Did the Association of Urban and Rural Municipalities in Canada pass a resolution asking for this? I do not think they did.

We are telling the municipalities that while they did not ask for this we think they should have it. This attitude is much too prevalent in Canada today. This is another example of telling them what we think is best. Before this goes any further, we should determine whether the municipalities want it or not. The municipalities know whether or not it is required. They also know that the greatest hazard is at level crossings.

The federal government is not doing its part. It rationed the grade crossing fund to the point where it is practically useless. Consequently, we are now asked to deal with other legislation to do the job. However, this does not deal with the areas where the majority of people are being injured or killed. Scores of people are injured and killed at level crossings every year in both urban and rural areas.

The federal government should be contributing to this cost. We in the House of Commons should not pass legislation which will place additional expense on the municipalities without agreeing to share in that expense. There is too much of that type of legislation today.

As the NDP member suggested a few moments ago, let us deal with the greatest hazard, level crossings. With the old grade crossing fund, the federal government made a definite contribution. The municipalities knew where they stood. At one time if a municipality built a level crossing, underpass or overpass, the federal government contributed up to 75 per cent of the cost. In fact, at one point it contributed up to 90 per cent. At that time there was a lot of protection and hundreds of lives were saved.

We have now reached the point where the provincial departments of highways do not know what the federal government will do in connection with overpasses and underpasses. That type of protection saves many lives. As I said, lights and bells are not foolproof. It is important to separate the trains from road vehicles; that is the only foolproof way. This costs more money, but how can we put a dollars and cents value on human life?

I see I only have another minute or so. If anything is to be done to save human lives, we should concentrate our efforts where the need is the greatest. In my view, the need is greatest at the level crossings, not along the miles and miles of tracks.

**Mr. Bill Kempling (Burlington):** Mr. Speaker, I will only speak for a couple of minutes. It is obvious from the comments of various members of the NDP and this party that there is general agreement with the principle of the bill, but they are concerned about some weaknesses and inequities. With this type of situation, it would be wise to pass it on to committee where witnesses could be called and the concerns of the municipalities considered. The committee could also look at those areas of the bill where members feel it has not gone far enough. Therefore, I feel it would be wise to pass it on to committee and have witnesses called. I think we are in general agreement with the principle. Maybe we can do something constructive in this way.

**Mr. Douglas Fisher (Mississauga North):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a couple of comments on this. For a short time, because of a technicality, the bill was in my name. That was straightened out and it is back in the name of the parliamentary secretary who has worked on this problem for a long time. I am happy to extend him due recognition of the hard work he has done on this matter.

● (1750)

I think the hon. member raised a very important question; that is, who will pay for these fences? I did some research when the bill was my responsibility. I phoned Mayor McCallion, the mayor of my municipality, and councillor Margaret Marland whose ward the tracks run through, as well as several school board officials in Mississauga. They all concluded that the question of paying for these fences has both a minus and a plus side.

On the plus side, we would not put up miles of fence. We are not going to affront the railroads by threatening them with miles and miles of fences at the extra cost involved, because