

Railway Act

the freight trains at night have exactly the same life as anyone who operates a train in daylight.

Mr. Broome: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Winch: No. We are most interested in the protection of the lives of employees and of passengers, but we know from the information we have received that freight trains have not been curtailed in daylight or night. The question is curtailment of services and public hearings. The Minister of Transport was quite correct in what he said and he was reading from a memorandum supplied to him. He told us that, and therefore I am not breaking any secret. The memorandum which he read said that in the event of changes in prices, curtailment of services or change of hours, it is all posted. He was quite correct when he said that the board of transport commissioners will receive complaints and will even send out an investigator to look into the situation. That is good; but, in the final analysis, the power to hold an official hearing and to bring down a ruling on the curtailment of services does not come under the jurisdiction of the board of transport commissioners. It is of the utmost importance that the board of transport commissioners should have the power not only to hold official hearings but to decide finally whether a curtailment of services is in order.

The hon. member for Vancouver South and the Minister of Transport both made a point about unprofitable operations. I think I can also say it was mentioned by the hon. member for Athabaska (Mr. Bigg). When you consider the operations of a railroad it must be realized that they must not be carried on on a day-to-day basis only this week, this month, next year; but with the background of the railroad systems of Canada in mind; more especially when one considers the Canadian Pacific railroad. If hon. members are interested they will find that in the construction of the Canadian Pacific railroad not one but numerous empires were given away free of charge by Canada,—

Mr. Hamilton (York West): Keep to the point.

Mr. Winch:—including rights to the finest land, timber and minerals of Canada. I know that in British Columbia, and particularly true on Vancouver island where only about 75 miles of railroad were built the railroad grants ran into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. Hamilton (York West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, this hon. member was one of those who raised a question about speakers on this side of the house keeping

to the subject. He himself is now offending that rule very badly at the moment.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with the statement made and read by the Minister of Transport as a reason for the curtailment of services, and also mentioned by the hon. member for Athabaska and the hon. member for Vancouver South, who referred to the rate of return on a profitable operation and said that it was part of this entire question. I am dealing with that exact point. If they want to consider the rate of a profitable return on a certain train or a certain service, then they must take into consideration at the same time not only the profit or the loss of today but the profits made previously under grants to the railways by the Dominion of Canada. I am still commenting on what has been given as reasons for opposition to this bill. Am I permitted to continue, sir?

Mr. Speaker: I think the hon. member is in order if he deals with the question of current profits but if he goes back to the origins of the railways it seems to me he is straying away from the immediate question before the house.

Mr. Winch: Are you saying that the billions of dollars worth of grants made are not to be considered today?

An hon. Member: Why?

Mr. Winch: I know you free enterprisers would like to forget that. It is to be noted that in British Columbia, where passenger service has been curtailed, freight service has not because one of the grants was made to the company which now has a 55 per cent control of Kimberley and Trail. On that basis we should also decide whether or not services ought to be continued. In view of the past, and the free grants of the mineral, timber and land given to the railroad companies they should not now be in a position, without reference to the board of transport commissioners and without the authority of the board of transport commissioners, to curtail service to the people and maintain for their own purposes their freight operations.

No matter how you look at it, it is an involved question at all times, this question of transportation. We feel strongly that the board of transport commissioners, having been granted the power, and rightly so, of hearing and deciding final action on the abandonment of lines, it is just as logical and perhaps even more necessary that the board of transport commissioners should have a similar power to finally dispose of any representations that may be made on curtailment of service.