

National Transportation Policy

United States railway system and as such should be wholly under the control of the federal government. As Chief Justice Hall pointed out in the recent decision handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada, no one disputes the jurisdiction of the province of British Columbia in incorporating a railway to operate wholly within its boundaries, but it is equally clear that the province has no jurisdiction to incorporate a railway which is, in its inception and concept, international in character. He goes on to say when the application to incorporate the Kootenay and Elk Railway was made the incorporators knew that it was to be an appendage to be used entirely so far as international rail traffic was concerned.

I should like to deal with several of the economic aspects of this particular Kootenay and Elk railway and point out how it could severely affect the whole transportation policy of Canada. It seems to me, if the federal government intends to allow the building of a small spur line in one province, such as we see in respect of the Kootenay and Elk railway, and allow it to haul bulk cargo, in this particular case coal, down to the United States border and over a United States communications system to the Pacific coast, then there is nothing to stop similar lines being built in every province of Canada. What, for example, is there to stop another link being built in a prairie province or in all the prairie provinces to connect with a United States railway line to the south so that Canadian wheat could be hauled to eastern or western points. What would stop a similar link being built to carry bulk cargoes of potash over United States railway lines? All I need mention in so far as the interior of British Columbia is concerned, is that there is nothing to stop tens of thousands of cars of lumber going down these spur lines into the United States when in my frank opinion the cargo should be hauled over our existing communications system. This would not only affect the province of British Columbia. It would affect the entire transportation system of Canada.

We find that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) and the federal government have kept mighty mum in respect of this particular rail link. The position our party has taken, which I strongly endorse, is that we should stop the building of the Kootenay and Elk railway, even if this means amending the Railway Act in order to make certain that construction does not go ahead. Very recently the Corporation of the City of Revelstoke, a number of other municipalities and organizations in our area, and in fact in the whole interior of British Columbia, have been sending briefs to the Transport Commission, to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to the Minister of Transport, and, of course, to their local M.P. in opposition to the building of the Kootenay and Elk railway. They know what will happen. Every unit train which is diverted south of the border will mean that 60 or 70 Canadian jobs will go down the drain. In a time of high unemployment we are fed up being faced with the possibility of a further erosion in the employment picture so far as the whole Kootenay area is concerned. This is what is disturbing these people. It is not a case of them being selfish or greedy. They realize jobs mean a large payroll in the communities in which they live.

We and the people in these communities are aware of the severe economic loss which will take place in respect

of Canadians generally if this line is allowed to go ahead. There is another aspect of this which I believe I must draw to the attention of members of this House. I am not thinking merely in terms of jobs so far as Canadian railway workers are concerned. I am thinking of jobs related to this whole matter of diverting trade to a foreign railway line. If the Kootenay and Elk railway is built, the sponsors have already stated that they are going to use the equipment belonging to the Burlington Northern railway. What does this mean? It means loss of Canadian jobs. Let me put it in another way. The locomotives that haul the coal trains are built in the city of Montreal by Canadian workers using Canadian material. Every coal car in the unit trains, and they are 70 or 80 cars long, is built down in Nova Scotia in the Hawker-Siddeley plant in an area where there is extremely high unemployment, and again they are using Canadian material. The steel for the railway line which has to be replaced quite frequently comes from Ontario, from Sault Ste Marie, Hamilton and the other steel plants in the province. All kinds of communications equipment is manufactured right here in Canada, and even the ties that we put under the rails come from our British Columbia woods. This is why I contend it is not only a problem of employment in the Kootenay area. This is a national problem, and we have to look at it nationally. If the construction of this link goes ahead, and we do not take a firm and decisive stand on it, then similar links will be built in other parts of Canada for the hauling of bulk products, again with an erosion of the type of jobs which I have just mentioned.

• (1700)

It is for these and for other reasons that we are asking the federal government to set down a crystal clear communications policy for Canada. Wherever possible, bulk cargoes and goods should be carried over existing Canadian communication lines to the points of export. There is nothing wrong with that. We have been subsidizing the railway systems for years on their coal hauls in an effort to make them pay their way. Just when we reach a point at which they might make some profit through the lucrative coal hauls, there is talk of diverting a part of this trade to a foreign rail line. I want to say that this does not meet with any amount of approval so far as the residents in our area are concerned. We are strongly opposed to it and we are asking the federal government to do something about it.

So far as this rail link is concerned, I do not want to see it built to haul coal. In fact, I do not want to see it built at all, even as a common carrier because the very same principle would apply. If it is built as a common carrier we are going to see a big chunk of our lumber go down the Windermere valley over the American lines and on to the various parts of the United States where lumber is taken to market. This will reduce the railway crews working on the Prairies, because this lumber now goes as far east as Manitoba and down into the United States through Emerson.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Mr. Ross Whicher (Bruce): Mr. Speaker, I hope to be very brief because many of the things that I will be saying