

Transportation

compete. It is obvious that as between the truckers and the railways commodity rates on items which could be carried by trucks are competitive, and they are at the present time not under any control.

Mr. Rock: Mr. Chairman, speaking on clause 1 of Bill No. C-231, an act to define and implement a national transportation policy for Canada, to amend the Railway Act and other acts in consequence thereof and to enact other consequential provisions, my immediate interest will centre upon clause 78 which pertains to level crossings and the grade crossing fund. The government provides up to 80 per cent of the cost of such works, with a maximum of \$500,000, 15 per cent being payable by the highway authorities be they municipal or provincial and 5 per cent being payable by the railway companies. This bill extends these provisions for a further three years.

The Minister of Transport is aware that I have asked him to study the possibility of amending this bill in order to give the new commission the power to initiate, plan and execute works to eliminate level crossings. At that time he referred me to the transport committee of which I am a member. I have had occasion to ask whether this could be done and I was told by legal advisers of the C.P.R. and the C.N.R. that they believed that the present board has this power but has never exercised it. Some of the officials of the transport department, backed up by justice department officials, are of the opinion that the commission does not have this power. They believe it would be unconstitutional for the federal government to impose works and costs on a provincial department or on a municipality which comes under provincial jurisdiction. For this reason I intend to ask that clause 78 stand until the minister can explain whether we can or cannot bring in such an amendment. If we can, I should like to have the opportunity to put forward an amendment of this kind.

● (7:50 p.m.)

All members of the house are aware of the serious level crossing accident which occurred in Dorion. A day later another occurred on Sources Road which divides Dorval and Pointe Claire. Recently there have also been serious level crossing accidents at Port Hope and Pickering, contributing to a total of 480 serious level crossing accidents in Canada ending in death or serious injury. The average is more than one level crossing accident a day.

The general public, and especially those who live in my constituency, are concerned about safety. Recently the officials of the city of Dorval requested that a pedestrian underpass be built beneath the Pine Beach pedestrian level crossing at Dorval. The Board of Transport Commissioners has informed me that the roads department of the province of Quebec will execute works to separate the grade at Sources Road in Pointe Claire-Dorval and St. Charles Road in Beaconsfield immediately after Expo closes.

The reason the roads department is holding back construction is that they feel it would cause undue traffic delay during the period of Expo. Officials of the city of Pierrefonds are meeting with an official of the board on Thursday of this week to discuss the possibility of separating the grade at Monte de Liesses.

What disturbs me is this: suppose the grade crossing fund has been depleted as a result of the interest shown lately by municipalities which stand to benefit from it. Will the minister ask that a supplementary amount be voted in order that no shortage of finances will cause delays in the construction of overpasses or underpasses to eliminate dangerous level crossings?

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps I might be permitted to say that I will consider very carefully what the hon. member has said.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mongrain: Mr. Chairman, to my knowledge Bill No. C-231 is probably one of the most comprehensive and most elaborate bills ever introduced in this house.

I do not intend to read over the national policy, as it is described in the first paragraphs, since all my colleagues have had the opportunity to read the bill.

I will simply say to the minister that, in my opinion, this appears to me as very timely legislation, since there seems to exist, in the Canadian transportation field, a situation reminiscent of the Middle Ages, because of the extent to which it has become unable to keep up with events. It was time we looked into the situation.

I will not analyse in any definite way all the clauses of the bill, because I went over it rapidly, but I do want to hear the opinion of all my colleagues concerning some of the clauses before I make up my mind. Let us simply say that, in general—and I repeat what I said earlier—it will help to clarify a chaotic