

Branch Railway Lines

bill, but first we need to see it. Further, following the question I asked the minister this afternoon, I want to say to him we know the report of the royal commission has been in the hands of this and the previous government for many months. It may be argued that already too much time has gone by, but it is absolutely essential that the experts in this field, such as the counsel for Alberta in Ottawa—and I may say Manitoba and Saskatchewan have their own experts—should have time to prepare their arguments. I have talked many times to the counsel for Alberta and he thinks he and his colleagues would be able to prepare arguments in six weeks. I am not asking for any undue delay when the bill goes to committee, but I do plead with the minister that he allow at least six weeks from the time the representatives of the provinces see the bill until they prepare and present their cases.

It will be up to the committee to decide how long it wants to hear such submissions but, as the minister pointed out this afternoon, I am certain they will not railroad it through to the point where they prevent any valid representations or arguments being made to the committee. A minimum of six weeks should be allowed for these people to prepare their cases, and following that it may be desirable for the committee to allow another three or four weeks for these people to prepare rebuttals to other submissions made to the committee.

The lifeblood of the economy of many communities is dependant on railway transportation. In view of this, and if there is going to be a large departure from the tariffs controlled by the government, taking into account competitive factors, ample time should be allowed so that all interested parties may be heard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss if I did not sincerely congratulate the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) who has set out his resolution in a simple, clear and specific way, without any political partisanship, but rather with the purpose of introducing legislation he is bent on.

We seldom see a minister do that with so much simplicity, and I think it is proper to congratulate him for having done so this afternoon.

However, his resolution, like all those we had before us, is couched in rather vague terms. This is not peculiar to this case, but to all resolutions presented to us. In fact,

[*Mr. Olson.*]

everyone gets up and says: Well, since we do not quite know what it is all about, since we do not know what the bill will be, let us wait and see.

All those who spoke before me repeated the same thing: before offering our criticism and observations, before making suggestions, let us wait until we see the bill.

Therefore, I wonder, after sitting in this house for two years and a half, whether the resolution stage is essential to parliamentary procedure.

Indeed, I wonder like those who rose before me, if I should discuss the bill, since I do not know what will be in it.

Therefore, it might be proper to question the usefulness of this stage in our parliamentary procedure.

So, I shall say, like all the others—and it is normal—that I shall wait to see the bill in order to know exactly what is in it before offering my observations, my comments and my suggestions.

Mr. Chairman, all previous speakers mentioned the part played by railways within the context of Canadian unity.

In the past the part played by railways was far more important than nowadays to achieve some kind of economic unity, because they were connecting various regions with one another, and encouraging the export trade of certain goods.

But nowadays, our very modern roads, our superhighways, where trucks as long and spacious as railway cars can roll, the St. Lawrence seaway which runs from the Atlantic to the great lakes and which allows the shipping of wheat and grain stored in elevators, planes which are more convenient and not much more expensive for the transportation of passengers from Halifax to Vancouver, Toronto or Winnipeg, in short, other means of transportation, including individual transportation, have become as important if not more so than railways for the Canadian economic and political unity.

Therefore, those new means of communication, such as air transportation and the St. Lawrence seaway, and especially the trucking business, should not be destroyed in an attempt to overly assist the railways.

It is essential to find a happy medium likely to satisfy everybody and to enable us to achieve our aims.

The government must see to it that what has to be done is done, whether it be by the railways or by the trucking industry. It must not help one at the expense of the other, but