

some time ago, and I am happy to be allowed to repeat it now because the question has some urgency, that the procedures laid down in the amendments approved by parliament with respect to rail line abandonment will be followed whether the Board of Transport Commission hears the cases or the new commission hears them.

Mr. L. R. Sherman (Winnipeg South): May I ask a supplementary question of the Minister of Transport, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister say when the new Canadian transport commission will be appointed?

Mr. Pickersgill: Well, it cannot be appointed in full until part I is proclaimed. I am advised, however, that it would be possible to appoint one or two officers, if that was deemed advisable, in order to do the work preparatory to the establishment of the commission. One difficulty, of course, is that once the commission is established, it must start to operate at once because the existing boards go out of existence the same day.

Mr. Dinsdale: May I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister assure the house that no railway line abandonment hearings will be heard until such time as the commission is in operation?

Mr. Pickersgill: No, sir, I do not think that would be a reasonable thing for me to do, nor would it be in accordance with the law as passed by parliament. It is highly improbable that any new applications will be heard, but it should be remembered that some of these applications were made more than four years ago. They were stayed for a very long period; and since a transitional period was provided for under the act, it does not seem to me it would be fair to disregard the law enacted by parliament last session.

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Albert): May I ask a supplementary question for clarification. Is it possible to have abandonment hearings under the old procedures, or does the minister now consider that abandonment hearings will be held under the new procedures?

Mr. Pickersgill: I gave the assurance—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would think the hon. member is now asking for an interpretation of the law, and the question as such is not acceptable.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder if I may be permitted to clear up this point.

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Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister is asking for the indulgence of the house to clear up a statement. Does the house agree?

Mr. Pickersgill: I believe there is a great deal of public interest in this matter, sir, so I should like to make it as clear as possible that the new procedures will be followed in the hearing of any applications by the Board of Transport Commissioners in the interval before the new commission is established.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Acadia): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Did the minister not say during the transportation bill debate that no applications would be heard until the new board was set up? The new board, we were told, would establish a costing system under which the same principles would apply both to lines to be abandoned and lines to be retained. I am sure the minister will remember stating in the debate that the new commission would handle these applications.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think we have heard enough clarifications now.

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, the minister stated in this house that he had been authorized by both railways to announce that all applications would be withdrawn on the day the bill went through parliament. So if all the old applications were withdrawn, these other applications must be new. This is in direct contradiction to what was said in this house.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member may be right, but that is not a question of privilege.

[Later:]

Mr. Ed. Schreyer (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the absent minded Minister of Transport. May I ask the minister whether he regards the proceedings to be held later this month, in which the Board of Transport Commissioners will hear the Canadian Pacific Railway application for abandonment under the old section 168 rather than the new section 134 to be a violation of his solemn assurance given to this house last fall.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That question is not acceptable.

Mr. Schreyer: Ten o'clock.