

AID TOWARDS ELIMINATING LEVEL CROSSINGS.

The House in committee on the following proposed resolution:

Resolved, That it is expedient to provide that the sum of two hundred thousand dollars per annum be appropriated and paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for ten consecutive years from the first day of April, nineteen hundred and nineteen, to aid actual construction work for the protection, safety and convenience of the public in respect of highway crossings of railways at rail level, in existence on the first day of April, nineteen hundred and nine.—Hon. Mr. Reid—Mr. Boivin in the Chair.

Hon. J. D. REID (Minister of Railways and Canals): This simply extends for a period of ten years the provision in the Railway Act which expires on April 1 next. There is no change whatever except as to the extension of time. The Act was passed ten years ago and expires in April. It is necessary to pass a Bill founded upon this resolution in order that the Board of Railway Commissioners may continue paying the Dominion Government's proportion on any crossing that they may decide it should pay.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Guysborough): Can the minister give us any information as to the number of crossings towards the elimination of which aid has been granted?

Mr. REID: No, I have not that information. We will have this question up again when we have the Railway Act before the House. In the Consolidated Railway Act, which we shall have before the House in a short time, it is proposed to amend the present Act by increasing the Government's contribution to twenty-five per cent of the cost of the actual construction work, but it shall not exceed in any such case the sum of \$15,000, and no such money shall be applied in any one year to more than six crossings on any one railway in any one municipality, or more than once in any one year to any one crossing. If the Consolidated Railway Act were in existence it would not be necessary to pass the present Bill, but as it may take some time to enact, we deem it well to bring down the present Bill.

Mr. ROBB: Is there a fixed policy which the Board of Railway Commissioners follows, as between the railways, the municipalities, and the Government?

Mr. REID: The Board of Railway Commissioners determines what proportion of the cost should be paid by the municipalities, the railway companies, and the Dominion Government respectively.

Mr. ROBB: Is there a fixed policy that governs throughout the country, in the country districts as well as in the cities, with respect to this matter? What is the policy of the Government in connection with new roads that are constructed? Is the construction of such roads allowed to go on, regardless of the level crossing arrangement, subject to that being fixed up afterwards, or is there a definite policy that governs before construction is undertaken?

Mr. REID: I could not say what the policy of the Railway Commission is. It is left entirely to the Board to decide in each particular case. I do not think the Board has any general policy that a certain percentage shall be paid on every crossing, whether it is in a rural district or in a city; each case is considered on its merits. If the matter is brought to the attention of the Board prior to the road being built, it, of course, has power to take action.

Mr. MURPHY: Does it rest with the Board of Railway Commissioners alone to determine where and when the crossings shall be constructed?

Mr. REID: No, the charter granted by Parliament entitles the company to run through any part of the country unless appeal is made to the Board of Railway Commissioners prior to construction having been commenced. If the road has been constructed the Board can take action.

Mr. MURPHY: My hon. friend did not catch the nature of my question. I inquired whether it rested with the Board of Railway Commissioners alone to determine where and when railway crossing such as are mentioned in the motion are to be constructed.

Mr. REID: I cannot answer my hon. friend explicitly, because I am not fully aware of the powers of the Board of Railway Commissioners.

Mr. MURPHY: The date mentioned in the resolution is first of April, 1909. Should that not be the first of April, 1919?

Mr. McMASTER: Might I suggest that the hon. members who are on their feet should speak louder, and that those hon. gentlemen who are seated should either converse less audibly or not at all?

Mr. REID: The resolution provides the present Act expires, and this Bill is to continue its provisions for another ten years. I think the date should be 1919.