

Transportation

[Translation]

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT**INVESTIGATION INTO GRIEVANCES
OF EMPLOYEES**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Auguste Choquette (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Postmaster General, to whom I extend my congratulations for a brilliant tour of the lower St. Lawrence.

I should like to ask the minister if the report of Mr. Justice Montpetit on the working conditions of the postal workers has been turned over to him and when it will be made public?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté (Postmaster General): No, Mr. Speaker, it has not yet been referred to me, but I expect to receive it before the end of the month.

Mr. Choquette: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the postal workers have indicated through the press their intention to go on strike, have representations been made to the minister by representatives of the said postal workers?

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): No, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

TRANSPORTATION**PROVISION FOR DEFINITION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL POLICY**

The house resumed, from Tuesday, September 6, consideration of the motion of Mr. Pickersgill for the second reading of Bill No. C-231, 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.

Mr. W. H. A. Thomas (Middlesex West): Mr. Speaker, when the house adjourned last evening I was seeking to make the point that while our railway legislation is before us for consideration particular attention should be paid to providing by statute for the disposition and rehabilitation of railway rights of way after abandonment has taken place.

I pointed out that I had private bills on this subject in 1962 and 1963 on which there was debate. However, no action was taken. There is another bill on the order paper in my name this year dealing further with the matter.

Now that the general revision of railway legislation is being considered I feel this is a most appropriate time at which to deal with the problem presented by abandoned rights of way. I cited our experience in Middlesex West when the Courtright branch of the New York Central Railway was abandoned in 1960 as an example of what is likely to happen. Business disruption was slight because there had been virtually no business over this line for years, but the abandoned right of way created serious and very irritating problems. The rails and ties and any remaining useful culverts were torn out, leaving an unsightly mess. The fences, which had been neglected for some years pending abandonment, were left in deplorable condition and resulted in a livestock nuisance. The right of way subsequently was covered with a growth of brush, burdocks, thistles and an inglorious assortment of all noxious weeds known to the district.

Railways are always a nuisance in farm areas because almost invariably they divide farm lots into awkward parts. They create a crossing problem and they create a problem of cultivating odd-shaped fields.

While the railway continues to operate, this inconvenience is ameliorated by properly maintained fences, gates and grade crossings. When abandonment takes place the crossings are torn out, the drains blocked, the gates and fences are left in useless shape and the right of way becomes an unrestricted multiplying ground for noxious weed seeds. The New York Central right of way has now been sold en bloc to private speculators who have proved very difficult to contact. The county weed inspector has been unable to get action on the weeds. This right of way has become an eyesore, a nuisance and a menace to the community.

For further details of the tribulations and frustrations encountered by the people along this abandoned railway line, I refer hon. members to the debate of February 9, 1962. These difficulties are continuing. No one seems to know or care about cleaning up this mess. Surely the members of this house do not wish this most unsatisfactory experience to be repeated in other parts of the country. Although the difficulties in this New York Central case were not connected with rail-tied investments, grain storage, or alternate transport facilities to the same extent as they might be in other cases of abandonment, these problems of field separation, fencing,