

Transportation

wishes to ask a question or take part in the debate.

Mr. Allard: Mr. Chairman, the question was asked previously by the hon. member for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier). I should like to participate in the debate for five or six minutes, not very long, as you deem it proper.

[*English*]

Mr. Cadieu (Meadow Lake): Mr. Chairman, I must say that I have followed this bill with a great deal of interest. When I spoke on another clause I mentioned that my constituency had many problems. At that time the minister mentioned that he hoped I would read the bill. I have done so; I have studied it from cover to cover. I must say I am very pleased with the debate which has taken place. The debate has been thorough as I believe it should be on a subject as important as transportation in this great nation of ours.

• (5:40 p.m.)

I was very pleased to note that the minister was aware of the concern in my area with regard to rail line abandonment. I was also very pleased to hear the announcement made by the minister the other night that no applications for rail line abandonments will be granted before 1975. I think this is very good but I hope that in the meantime consideration will be given to closing the gaps to which I referred so as to provide the service which rightfully belongs to the people in that area.

I did some further research to find out more about the contract that was signed for the construction of a branch line on Spruce Lake the subdivision of the old Canadian Northern Railway and to discover what was holding it up. I have in my hands the Order in Council with regard to this matter and I should like to put on record, that it is dated May 27, 1927, 40 years ago. This 38-mile gap has been left there for 40 years. If one looks at the map of rail line abandonments one can see a natural barrier in the area north of the North Saskatchewan river. Not a single railway line crosses the provincial boundary in that area. I think this is a shame and I believe that discrimination has been exercised. One can see there a gap extending 38 miles. The result is that all freight on the west side of the provincial boundary has had to be transported through Edmonton to reach the head of the lakes or the port of Churchill.

[The Deputy Chairman.]

Mr. Donald Gordon, speaking in Winnipeg in 1962, referred to the cost of moving grain over some of the branch lines. He estimated that the cost in some cases was as high as 15 cents per ton-mile. When one realizes the amount of grain that has had to be transported hundreds of additional miles owing to the gap existing there one realizes that if a rail line had been built to close the gap it would have paid for itself in one year.

Hon. members may wonder why more people in that area have not spoken and asked that this important gap be closed. The reason is that people become discouraged when they wait for something for 40 years. We realize that there is no shortage of material for building railway lines. What I wish to bring out tonight is not the fact that we know that this line will not be abandoned for a few years but our hope that the railway company will decide to fill in this gap to give the people the service that is required.

In the same speech in Winnipeg Mr. Gordon pointed out that in many cases grain was being trucked for 4 to 8 cents per ton-mile. I do not think Mr. Gordon has ever done much trucking or he would not have quoted such a figure. I am familiar with trucking and I know that any truck driver who attempted to haul grain for 4 cents per ton-mile would not be in business very long. I hope that the railway will decide to close this gap at the earliest possible date. Then we can consider the situation and decide whether the line is a paying proposition.

I did some further research to find out what has been done about the expansion of the line from St. Walburg in Saskatchewan to Bonnyville in Alberta. I have here a copy of the Order in Council dated July 2, 1929. The first paragraph reads as follows:

The committee of the privy council have had before them a report, dated June 27, 1929, from the Acting Minister of Railways and Canals, representing that the management of the Canadian National Railway Company have furnished a plan showing the proposed location of a proposed branch line of railway of the Canadian National Railway Company, one hundred and twenty-six miles in length, extending from St. Walburg in the province of Saskatchewan, to Bonnyville in the province of Alberta. The expenditure for this line, estimated at \$4,212,000, has been authorized by chapter 32 of the Statutes of Canada, 1929.

I think this is disgraceful because although the grade was constructed the steel was only laid from Bonnyville to Grand Centre,