

Transportation

incorporate in its legislation a provision to cover the problem to which I intend to refer. The idea is to provide the Board of Transport Commissioners with both the authority and the responsibility to specify the conditions upon which any railway line may be abandoned, and my remarks spring from an experience in my own constituency as well as from experiences of this kind in several adjoining constituencies in recent years.

The MacPherson commission has forecast the abandonment of 8,000 miles of uneconomical railway branch lines in Canada. Lack of patronage indicates that these lines are no longer required. These branch lines served a pressing need in the days of horse-drawn vehicles 50 years ago, but they cannot possibly compete with the modern motor transport for either short haul passenger service or freight service. On the grounds of economy they should be abandoned, but the government through the Board of Transport Commissioners should accept responsibility for the manner in which abandonment takes place.

Many interests are involved. There is displacement of labour; new jobs must be found; business is disrupted; rail-tied investments are sometimes jeopardized; agricultural delivery points are eliminated, and there are problems connected with the rehabilitation of the abandoned right of way.

It is this aspect of the problem which concerns me this evening. Abandonment can be carried out as an orderly transition if it is done in an orderly manner. If left unplanned and uncontrolled, however, it can become a very disagreeable experience for many of the people involved.

As a good instance of unplanned and uncontrolled abandonment, I would draw attention to the developments following the abandonment, in 1960, of the Courtright branch of the New York Central railway, which extends from St. Thomas westwards through the counties of Lambton, Middlesex and Elgin. Train service had almost disappeared from the line. Business disruption was slight, but the abandonment of the right of way created serious and very irritating problems. The rails and ties and any useful culverts remaining were torn out, leaving an unsightly mess. The fences, which had been neglected for some years pending abandonment, were left in deplorable condition. I suppose one cannot blame a railway company for not keeping up a line which it intends to abandon.

Mr. Speaker, may I call it ten o'clock?

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. gentleman seems to have a very short speech and I wonder whether we should not try to get it all in one issue of *Hansard*?

Mr. Thomas: If there were unanimous consent I would be prepared to continue.

Mr. Pickersgill: There is consent on this side of the house.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member to continue?

Mr. Churchill: Ten o'clock.

An hon. Member: Not so.

At ten o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.
