

*Railway Act*

railroadman should certainly be given consideration. The idea he advances should not be ruled out merely because the idea emanates from the other side of the House. If it is a good idea, it ought to be considered by the government.

No occupation is immune from danger, and we shall never achieve a situation in which accidents can be eliminated totally. However, we can work in all areas in order to minimize accidents. Certainly, safety for the work force is a concern of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) and all those associated with him in the Department of Labour. Although this matter under debate, as the hon. member knows, is not the immediate responsibility of the Minister of Labour, the minister certainly is concerned about safety, as is everyone working in the Department of Labour.

● (4:30 p.m.)

A few weeks ago I became involved in some of the negotiations involving members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. It was apparent from the very outset of discussions that the issues were far from being purely economic in nature. Other issues emerged, not the least of which was the matter of safety and working conditions. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, no one could have been unimpressed with the weight of the arguments advanced by some of the men who have to bring trains with as many as 150 cars through the Canadian Rockies and down the dangerous Fraser canyon. Those who maintain that the dispute was all a matter of economics, of how much of an increase per hour the engineers would receive, simply do not know the facts.

Those who have travelled across the country aboard Canada's two railways—and despite some of the problems they have had, I think we have been well served by our railroads and the people working on them—know the terrain which has to be traversed. Even the unpractised eye can detect some of the slide conditions that exist along the Fraser canyon. A few years ago when they had steam engines, the maximum number of cars the railroads could haul with an engine was 59. But year after year Detroit has been creating evermore powerful diesel units. The technologists have produced these “wonder” diesels, and now they have developed diesel locomotives which haul as many as 150 cars. However, the question is whether the technology of safety has advanced at the same rate as the genius of Detroit has advanced in designing these new and powerful engine units.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that safety has not made the same improvement, and I think the hon. member would agree with that. When you talk to some of the men who are faced with the problem of bringing these massive trains out to the Pacific coast, they tell you it is a dreadful feeling to know that it is almost impossible to stop such a unit in time, to know that you are going to hit a rock obstruction on the tracks and in a few minutes will have 150 cars “crawling up your back,” which is the expression they use.

The hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Skoberg) has pointed out that the Canadian Transport Commission has a study under way of general safety conditions on the

railroads, and I agree with him that the activities of the commission are to be commended. Next week, because of the efforts of the chairman of the Canadian Transport Commission and of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson), a special study is going to be made of safety conditions in the Fraser canyon. The study is the result as well of various representations made by hon. members of this House. I repeat that on the eighteenth and nineteenth—that is next week—a study is going to be made of conditions along the Fraser canyon, and as a member from a British Columbia constituency I commend the CTC and the Minister of Transport for acting so quickly in response to recent requests for an investigation. I hope that from this survey we will find some of the reasons for the number of deaths which have been occurring in the canyon.

In my view we need improved slide detector devices. In the case of the recent canyon crash, which resulted in the death of Mrs. Penner's husband and of the other two men, it is alleged that the slide detection devices had been out of operation for a full month prior to the crash. We have to get answers to that; we must improve detection devices. Perhaps it was impossible to keep them in operation because of snow conditions. To me it seems incredible that we have not apparently achieved any basic improvement in slide detector devices throughout the past 25 years while all diesel technology has been putting heavier units on the tracks. Surely if we can provide a magnificent system of radar at international airports and can equip ships with sonar devices, we can put something in the cabs of locomotives which will be able to provide a more adequate warning of track conditions ahead—perhaps an in-cab television device, an adaptation of radar, or some kind of sophisticated way to determine whether or not there is a slide on the tracks. We are still living in the nineteenth century with respect to some of these safety devices and I repeat that we have to develop more advanced slide detector devices. The improvement of safety conditions is one of the first things we must undertake to assist those who must earn their living with the railroads of Canada.

In conclusion, I wish to make a few remarks about the general safety of railway employees. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the majority of railway employees are employed in the non-operating sector of the railway industry which is subject to the provisions of the Canada Labour (Safety) Code. Employment, safety and health regulations covering such diverse subjects as machine guarding, hazardous substances, materials handling, noise, lighting, sanitation, electrical safety, and soon, have been developed to the final draft stage and are currently under legal review by the Department of Justice.

The regular safety inspection of federal work places, including maintenance shops and other railway facilities, has been under way for more than a year. In the past year—this is an indication of the minister's and his department's concern with respect to safety for railway employees—some 19,000 such inspections were made of enterprises subject to the safety code. In addition, approximately 500 special surveys and 17 comprehensive