

I do not think the minister is too optimistic. I think anyone in Canada, either in the east or the west, who talks of tearing up our railroad lines had better reconsider the matter very carefully. It may not be very long before we will be needing new railway lines. I think we should be given a clear picture of the railway situation, either by the Minister of Transport or by one of the former ministers of railways.

Mr. WALSH: If the hon. member reads the records of this house under the heading of railways he will get a full and complete answer to his questions.

Mr. ROSS (Moose Jaw): It would take me about five years to get it.

Mr. WALSH: I should like to suggest to the hon. member that no one is lacking in optimism, but we must face the cold facts. He is suggesting the expansion of our railroads, but he must not forget that in this country we have lines with only 250 people to the mile, whereas in the United States they have 500 people to the mile, and in England 2,000 people to the mile. Our trouble is that we have too many railroads and not enough people to support them. That is one point we should emphasize. The hon. member referred to a certain gentleman who has been going from one end of the country to the other trying to enlighten the people as to the real condition of our railways. I think that gentleman has been doing an honest day's work. If there were more like him the people of this country as well as hon. members of this committee would be more enlightened as to the actual railway situation in Canada. The railways of this country are in a serious position. There are few people who fully realize the seriousness of the situation. If we in this parliament, and the Minister of Transport in particular, do not do something to right present conditions, if we do not face this problem courageously, as Colonel Ralston said we should do, the railway problem will drag the country down. The sooner we get that fact in our minds, the sooner we will get down to a real effort to find a solution of our railway problem. It is no use talking about it: we must act. The action taken by the bill now before us is not the courageous action spoken of by Colonel Ralston in 1935. I was hoping that during his sojourn in office, the Minister of Transport would bring down to the house something really constructive in an effort to solve the railway problem which we must face sooner or later.

[Mr. J. G. Ross.]

Mr. HOWE: May I say just a word on that? I have had some experience along the lines referred to by my hon. friend, and if I brought down anything in this house which was a little bit courageous, I would have every expectation of the hon. member for Mount Royal (Mr. Walsh) voting against it. Further, he would not base his objection upon the optimism of any group, but would use as the basis of his objections the grain growers of western Canada, who have made no representations whatever in connection with this matter. That is what would actually happen if anything courageous was brought down.

Mr. CAHAN: The hon. gentleman has no right to make that assertion because in so doing he discloses that he has less knowledge of conditions in Canada than most hon. members of this committee. The minister should not expose his own ignorance by making an assertion of that kind.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. CAHAN: It is perfectly in order to say that.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Withdraw.

The CHAIRMAN: The word "ignorance" applied to an hon. member is out of order. The hon. member said "exposing his own ignorance."

Mr. BENNETT: Under certain conditions.

Mr. CAHAN: I suggested that he was disclosing his own ignorance of the matter he was discussing. If that is out of order I take it back; but still, in my own private opinion, it is ignorance.

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid the hon. member is not taking it back.

Mr. HOWE: I accept it.

Mr. CAHAN: I have the right to say it conditionally, and I did say it conditionally.

Mr. KINLEY: This section deals with surplus earnings of the Canadian National Railways, and why we should quarrel now over the distribution of future earnings of the Canadian National Railways seems to me to be at least—

An hon. MEMBER: A little premature.

Mr. KINLEY: I think so; a little premature. But whether they pay it to the government of Canada, that is the people of Canada, or use it in improving the system is only a splitting of hairs, because after all it is our baby; it has cost us a lot of money, and we have looked after it and shall have to look after it in the future.