

Heritage Railway Stations

particular case contacted the town council and the council and the town wanted to make use of that station, not to tear it down. Today that station sits there as a relic of the history of the railway and is used as a museum. Hundreds of people go through it and enjoy that station and will enjoy it for many, many years.

In the Village of Beiseker, again the railway contacted the council and gave it an opportunity to see what it wanted to do with the station. The council wanted that building. It did not want it destroyed, so the council agreed to take over the building. It was completely turned around because it was facing the railway and the council wanted it facing the main street. It was made into the town office, and not only the town office but the town library as well as a little place where they sell heritage items made by the people of that area. Again, this station will sit there for many, many years as a relic of an era that has passed by.

I could mention one other instance of this, and that is in the Town of Okotoks. The railway gave the town the opportunity to use the station. The railway is not using it, but the people of Okotoks, along with their town council, have made it into an arts centre. Now the artists and those who want to study drama have a place to go. Even public meetings are held there. I have held public meetings there personally. It is always a pleasure to go into that building and see the art that is being presented and made by the people of that area. Again, the station is being used to good advantage.

I have mentioned a few examples, but a great many stations have simply been torn down, destroyed or burned because the railway had no further use for them. It is a crying shame that we should lose those buildings.

I am not asking for a lot of expenditure on the part of the railways. That is why this Bill is not all inclusive. It does not say that the railways have to do any of the renovating, moving or decorating. That will be looked after by the people who want to preserve the stations and conserve them for future use. That is why the Bill is not all-encompassing.

A station may have to be moved, as the station in Beiseker was, completely put up on jacks and turned around, or it may have to be moved to another location. That will not be an expense borne by the railways or the Government. That will be an expense borne by the people who want to preserve the station, if there is such an expense involved. Consequently, the cost of this will not be on the shoulders of the taxpayers of Canada or the shoulders of the railways themselves.

There is another railway station sitting there waiting for something to happen to this Bill, and that is the one in the Town of Claresholm. The people want to use that station. The railway is through with it and it has been good enough to leave it there at the request of the town council which wants to use it as a heritage station and a museum. The townspeople are fixing up the grounds around it, and again, it will be used by the people for many, many years, as a representative of that era.

The Bill also provides that the Governor in Council will make regulations. This Bill sets out the skeleton and the regulations will be the meat on that skeleton, the meat that will enable any community with a heritage station to make sure that consideration is given to its preservation before anything happens to it. The railway companies will be obliged, when it comes to stations built in the early years, to notify the historic site boards that they plan to destroy or remove any stations.

The railways will also estimate the costs involved, so that the Minister and the Minister of Transport will be able to ascertain if it is fair to the railways to have these stations made into historic sites. That is almost the same as what is done with almost any building in any city that people want to preserve for future generations. They have to go through a certain mechanism, and the historic sites Board is well aware of those conditions and look after them.

I think this Bill is one for which many people are waiting. One other point I would like to mention is that when this Bill was before the House previously, I contacted various provincial Governments and I found that there is tremendous interest in this particular Bill provincially. As a matter of fact, one or two Ministers wrote to say that they had been waiting for a Bill like this for a long time because they want to preserve the railway stations in their particular provinces.

I cannot say how many railway stations will be affected, whether it would be many or few, but they are virtually limited to the railway stations that still exist and were built in another era, a time that has long since gone by, a time that will never come again. If we destroy these heritage stations now, they will be destroyed forever. If we preserve them now, they will be there as a monument to the past and as a useful instrument for many purposes in the future. I urge Hon. Members to support this Bill.

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments on Bill C-205 regarding heritage railway stations. I appreciate the fact that the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) brought this Bill forward, and I want to indicate my support for it in principle and my hope that today we can refer it to committee where it can be looked at in some detail.

As a member of the Fisheries and Oceans Committee, I noted the comment that the previous Bill had been referred to that committee. I agree with the Hon. Member that perhaps the Fisheries and Oceans Committee is not the appropriate forum in which to debate this issue.

The Bill provides a mechanism by which private citizens or indeed community interest groups could object to railway company plans to sell, move, destroy or alter railway stations. It gives citizens or community groups the opportunity to have those plans referred to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board to determine whether or not the station should be declared a heritage railway station or if any feature of it