

south Okanagan country, to Princeton. That is part of the whole rearrangement of the operations of this American line in British Columbia. Now if they are permitted to take up or abandon that line from Osoyoos to Princeton it will seriously affect a highly productive and important section of central British Columbia, and before giving permission for the lifting of the tracks on this section I should like the committee to have all the facts before them so that they may be in a position to give consideration to the proposals of the railway.

It may be advisable—I am not for a moment prepared to dogmatize—to permit the company to take up this particular section of track mentioned in the agreement from Colebrook to Sumas. I will admit that it is a line that runs through a section that is pretty well served by a trucking system, and so forth; so that may be quite all right. But that is only part of quite a scheme of abandoning roads, and before parliament ratifies this agreement and permits this American railway company to abandon several pieces of railway in Canada, in the province of British Columbia in this instance, we ought to be sure that the rights of the communities through which run the lines proposed to be abandoned are safeguarded. After a railroad has operated as this one I mentioned from Osoyoos to Princeton has been operating for twenty-five years I should say, and scores of families have built up a fruit farming industry along the line, before the company is permitted to abandon that road, parliament, if it has any control over the matter, ought to make sure that the rights of the people in the locality affected have been properly considered and that their representations have been heard. I do not know whether the sponsor of the bill or the chairman of the railway committee, whom I do not see at the moment, or any other member of the committee is in a position to give all the information that is necessary to assure us that the step to be taken is one that is warranted having regard to the rights of the settlers along the lines affected.

I feel, Mr. Chairman, that this is a very much more serious matter than it appears to be on the surface, and I should like to ask the sponsor of the bill or any other member of the railway committee who knows the facts if he could inform this committee in regard to the points I have raised.

Mr. McDADE: I regret that I am not in a position at the moment to give the Minister of Trade and Commerce the additional information he requires. So far as this bill is

concerned, it simply involves the elimination of running rights, as the minister has stated, between Sumas and Colebrook. Those running rights have not been exercised since 1918. In view of the request of the minister, however, it is agreeable to me that the bill should stand, and I will make inquiries from the solicitors, Messrs. Tupper and Hamilton at Winnipeg.

Mr. BENNETT: When the hon. gentleman is investigating, I suggest that his attention be particularly directed to the clauses that provide for the dismantlement of a portion of the line and to the provisions with respect to the payments that will be made in consequence thereof, and determine whether or not there are any settlers' rights that should be dealt with having regard to what was said in this house a year ago with respect to a similar matter when another railway company was dismantling a portion of its line to the detriment of the settlers. After all that is investigated, I think he would be in a position to answer some of the questions that are in the minds of this committee.

Mr. SPEAKMAN: In justice to the railway committee I should like to indicate that there was not any such laxity as it might be supposed there was, because the committee did with some care ascertain the opinion of the Department of Railways with respect to this bill. We were particular to ask whether the department had examined the bill and if they had any objection to it, and the point now raised was not raised by the department at that time.

Mr. MANION: In appearing before the railway committee with respect to a matter which does not directly affect the Department of Railways or the Canadian National Railways, I am there just as an ordinary member of the committee, and I do not think I expressed myself on this matter at all. I simply sat there and listened, and was informed in regard to it. I saw no reason to oppose the bill, as it did not affect the Canadian National Railways. I say that just to indicate my position in the matter.

Mr. SPEAKMAN: The query was not directed to the minister, but to the officer of the department who, I suppose, spoke for the department.

Mr. MANION: Only in a legal way. The officer was one of the legal officers of the department, and his purpose there is merely to advise from a legal standpoint.