

Railway Act

Sometimes he brings with him cups of coffee which he takes on at the stations together with some sandwiches which, on occasions, can be very dry indeed. I have travelled when there have been no coffee and no sandwiches; the rations have been entirely depleted because of the number of people travelling.

The C.P.R. will argue that the traffic does not warrant a better service, but what the C.P.R. is doing is actually reducing the traffic by making the service most unpopular. Everyone who can do so is travelling by some other means.

However, we in the Kootenays do not wish to be unfair. No one can expect companies to do the impossible, but this happens to be a very profitable section of the railway as a result of the hauling of ores from Kimberley and other mines to Trail and then the hauling of manufactured products from Trail to the coast and to other points in Canada. It is a profitable section of the road, and we feel that an area producing such a great amount of goods and such revenue for the C.P.R. should not be deprived of greatly needed rail facilities.

I am not going to elaborate at much greater length because I think the brief explains the situation quite well, but I do want to indicate that all this discontent is the cause of my having been asked to introduce this amendment to the Railway Act in order to give the board of transport commissioners the power to provide to municipalities concerned and affected by reductions of service such as I have described the opportunity to make representations to the board, and making certain that no company can reduce services without first hearing representations from the municipalities concerned.

Under the law as it now stands the railway companies are required to make application for a hearing only when they are going to abandon a service. They can reduce the service without making any application to the board of transport commissioners. This bill makes it necessary for them to make an application to the board of transport commissioners before being empowered to reduce a service, and makes provision that the board of transport commissioners should hear representations from the municipalities concerned in the area where the reduction of services is proposed.

I am sure the minister has a good picture of the situation with which I have been dealing, and I trust he will support this amendment to the Railway Act. It would mean a great deal not only to the people who are presently concerned in southeastern British Columbia, but to people in other parts of Canada.

I trust hon. members in this house generally will also support this bill as being to the general advantage of the people of Canada. While the Kootenay area suffers at the present time because of the lack of power vested in the board of transport commissioners, a good many Canadians in other parts of the country have suffered in the past because of the lack of these powers. Let us protect the rights of the people in the future by adopting this modest and, I think, very fair amendment to the Railway Act.

Hon. George H. Hees (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the house has been very interested, as I have been, in listening to the comprehensive outline of this situation given by the hon. member for Kootenay West.

As he has said, when I was in his riding in the course of the past election campaign I met with several delegations who put to me very strongly their objections to the curtailment of the Canadian Pacific Railway service in that area. I was very interested in what they had to say and, as the hon. member has stated, I promised I would bring their point of view personally to the attention of the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Mr. Crump.

When I got back to eastern Canada I did so in some detail, and spent some time talking the matter over with Mr. Crump. He told me in some detail also why the Canadian Pacific had found it necessary to adopt the course it did in curtailing these services. This is a highly important matter, particularly to the people in the district, and because of its importance I have also discussed the matter at quite some length with the board of transport commissioners.

Before dealing with the hon. member's bill I would like to deal with the question of the curtailed Canadian Pacific Railway service in the district. I believe I can do that most quickly and effectively by reading a letter written on June 9 by Mr. A. LeSage, assistant director of operation, of the operating department of the board of transport commissioners, addressed to Mr. F. T. Collins, special assistant and secretary to the minister, Department of Transport, Ottawa, Ontario. The letter is as follows:

Dear Sir:

Reference to your request for some general information on the train service Vancouver-Penticton-Nelson-Lethbridge, Canadian Pacific Railway.

The route travelled by these trains, is known as "Kettle Valley-Crownsnest route". It leaves the main line at Katz, British Columbia, 84 miles east of Vancouver and follows the Coquihalla pass in a southeasterly direction to Penticton and then easterly close to the American border to Nelson, B.C.; continues in a northeasterly direction to