

*Transportation*

removal of the bridge subsidy, which has served a very definite purpose in the development of the prairies, will in my opinion greatly affect the cost of transportation. At one of the committee meetings the minister said it was not possible to legislate for geography. We from the prairies consider that the bridge subsidy was an attempt to give due consideration to geographic areas and distances. At one of the meetings of the committee during which the bridge subsidy was discussed a witness stated that the payment of the subsidy represented a saving of, I think, 10 per cent in the cost of farm machinery to the prairies. I could hardly believe it. I will have more to say later on the long-haul problem when the clause regarding the bridge subsidy comes up for consideration.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Would the hon. member permit a question? It is my recollection that I did not say we could not legislate for geography. I think I said one could not legislate to remove geography.

**Mr. Pascoe:** I do not see much difference between the two statements. I am still pleading for consideration for the prairies with regard to this matter.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** After all, I represent Bonavista-Twillingate.

**Mr. Nielsen:** They did it with Lake Centre.

**Mr. Pascoe:** Much of Saskatchewan's future development depends on fair rates for long-haul marketing of low grade heavy commodities, and I am again referring to potash, sodium sulphate, coal and timber. I warn the minister that I intend to speak at greater length later with regard to this matter.

I should like to ask the minister to give us a definite assurance regarding the date of what he said was a commitment by the present Board of Transport Commissioners that there would be no abandonment of branch lines until Bill C-231 comes into effect.

I have a letter from Mr. Rump of the Board of Transport Commissioners for Canada dated December 14 and I trust that the minister's statement was made subsequent to that date. The letter states definitely that the application of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company to abandon its Kelfield Subdivision from Brass to Kelfield in northwest Saskatchewan, a distance of 27.9 miles, is on file with the board. The letter states:

The line is in the "eligible for abandonment" category without waiting upon the passage of Bill C-231 and the board is prepared to proceed with the application.

I ask the minister to give us a definite assurance that this does not mean that the board has made a decision to abandon that line, and again may I point out that the letter is dated December 14.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I gave my assurance since then. I repeat that I gave it after the hon. member for Springfield spoke and before the hon. member for Medicine Hat spoke. I have had an assurance from the chairman of the board since that date that while they may go on gathering statistics and other information of that sort no hearings will be held and no decisions will be made while the legislation is before parliament.

**Mr. Pascoe:** I thank the minister. I wanted those words put on record to ensure that this commitment was made after December 14. I shall therefore make no further reference to this matter.

I have one or two further questions. Last week I asked the minister a question but I did not press him for an answer because I knew that the transportation legislation would be coming up soon. I am referring to a news report in the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald* saying that the C.P.R. was raising its passenger fares for one month starting December 9 during the Christmas and New Year holiday season. It said that this increase was in line with the C.P.R. policy of raising rates at a time of greater demand for space on passenger coaches. It said that the fare increase would vary in different parts of Canada. It gave two or three examples and said that the fare from Moose Jaw to Calgary during the holiday season would be raised by \$5, that is, from the regular rate of \$16 to the special holiday rate of \$21. It said that the fare from Moose Jaw to Winnipeg would be increased from \$16 to \$17.50 on week days and up to \$18.50 on Fridays and Saturdays. The fare from Moose Jaw to Toronto was also raised, in accordance with the C.P.R. policy to raise fares during times of greater passenger demand, from \$30.60 to \$39.10. I asked the minister at that time if the company had the authority to make this decision on its own or whether it had to receive approval from the Board of Transport Commissioners.

● (7:40 p.m.)

While I was in my constituency I consulted an official who is very well connected with transportation agencies and he told me definitely that the trucking industry, which according to the bill is supposed to be in competition with the railways so as to keep rates