

Railway Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rea):—and appeals to the board. It has nothing to do with proposed lines or extensions or anything of that nature. It is strictly on the reduction of services.

Mr. Baldwin: May I say, sir, that I had only intended, in deference to your ruling to suggest that if proper care and caution were exercised in the selection of the route it would not be necessary at any time to apply for a reduction in services.

Mr. E. J. Broome (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of sympathy for the intent of this bill. I am quite conversant with the part of the country concerned, having done a good deal of travelling on this particular line of the C.P.R. and I trust the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) will allow a little groundwork to be laid, having in mind my various trips on that line since I think my remarks will have some bearing on this debate.

While travelling on the Kettle valley line in 1945 and 1950 we had dining room services, sleeper services and even a club car. The train would always be crowded and it looked to me as though it was a very paying proposition. As the minister pointed out there were certain changes in the year 1949 contingent upon the opening of the Hope-Princeton highway, which reduced the mileage from Vancouver to the Okanagan valley by something like 150 miles.

Travelling on the same line in the fifties you could see the traffic dwindle to the point where, when I made one of my last trips in that direction, I think I was the only person in the car, and on the entire train there were exactly, as far as I can remember, four people plus the train crew. However, this train gave a needed service to Nelson, Penticton, Trail and smaller communities between those points. It has been replaced by a Budd car service, as the minister pointed out, and I believe the reduction in travel time between Nelson and Vancouver is, as a result, something like seven hours. I made one of the last trips on the old style equipment but I must confess I have not been on the new Budd car service.

Discussing this service with the people who use the run I found they were in a bit of a quandary whether the reduction in the time taken made up for the lack of facilities on the new system. I think the minister was quite right in saying that while the service was a daily service there was not too much to be said against the service given to the people of the Kootenays.

However, due to a radical sect, the Sons of Freedom, who must not be confused with the law-abiding Doukhobors—and there are

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rea).]

a lot of Doukhobors in the Kootenays who are very fine citizens—the service had to be curtailed. The Sons of Freedom are a radical sect which has created a considerable amount of disturbance, to put it mildly, for the residents of the Kootenays, and that disturbance has resulted in the curtailment of the service so that it now runs, as we have been told, twice weekly going eastward and twice weekly going westward, those runs being timed during daylight hours. I have travelled along the highway, and there are certain sections of the highway which follow along the Coquahalla pass and which give you a bird's eye view of the construction of the Kettle Valley railway, and it must have been a very rough decision for the C.P.R. to decide they would run this train even during the daylight hours because, frankly, anyone going over it in daylight through the Coquahalla pass would not be likely to repeat the journey. It consists of innumerable short stretches of track jutting out on stilts, and innumerable short tunnels where a few sticks of dynamite could cause a very serious accident. Speaking for myself, I cannot blame the train crews or the railways for acting in the interests of safety by regulating operations on that line so that all running is done during daylight hours.

All this is, I believe, directed to the particular problem which prompted the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) to bring forward this bill. With regard to the actual wording of the bill, the purpose of the proposed amendment, as you, Mr. Speaker have pointed out, is to provide that the board of transport commissioners may at the request of a municipality deal with reductions of services. Actually when the hon. member for Kootenay West was speaking to this bill, I believe he used the phrase the board "must hear representations" from the interested municipalities. But, in fact, according to the wording of the bill, the board "may entertain an appeal from any interested municipality or municipalities and may confirm, disapprove or vary such reductions of service" and so on. The whole intent of the bill is to make certain that the board of transport commissioners is aware of reductions in services and that they have investigated these reductions to see whether there is an injustice being done—whether the service is to be reduced to cut out, say, a petty loss rather than a major loss—whether, in fact, a railway should have the right to reduce or modify its service in a particular instance.

Under the Railway Act it seems to me—and the hon. gentleman knows I am no lawyer, but it seems it is not too tough to find out how lawyers work—this question