

Transportation

rather harsh comments dealing with a definite commitment made by the minister, that there would be no proceedings relating to applications for abandonment of lines in western Canada until this bill was completed. Though the matter has been raised—

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the hon. gentleman quote my exact words?

Mr. Hamilton: The minister wishes me to quote what?

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the hon. gentleman quote my exact words?

Mr. Hamilton: I shall do that in a minute. These remarks are not aimed at the minister, as will be seen in a minute. I point out that there was an understanding that during the discussion of the bill certain things were not to be done. We hoped that a new philosophy would be in effect, and that a new type of thinking in this bill would be brought to bear on these lines being considered for abandonment. What we have seen in recent weeks, I think, can only be described as a breach of faith.

I am going to read some letters. The first letter I became aware of is dated December 6, 1966, from the Secretary Treasurer of 9 Rural Municipality in Saskatchewan, addressed to C. W. Rump, Secretary of the Board of Transport Commissioners. The letter reads:

Dear Sir:

Application for leave to abandon Hatton Subdivision, C.P.R.

We are in receipt of a letter from the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, under the date of November 21, 1966, in which an application for leave to abandon Hatton Subdivision has been made to you, the Board of Transport Commissioners.

I will not read the balance of the letter because it has no bearing on the point I was making.

On December 14, 1966, the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek received a letter from C. W. Rump, secretary to the board, referring to the Hatton Subdivision. The letter reads in part as follows:

The above mentioned application is on file with the Board. The Company has advised that a copy of the application and supporting documents were sent to various interested parties. The supporting information has been updated to 1965.

I want the committee to pay particular attention to this following paragraph:

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.

[Mr. Hamilton.]

It is this statement by the secretary of the board which caused some of our members to feel that we were being double crossed with respect to the understanding we thought we had with the minister. I wish to quote the exact words of the minister on this subject, and I shall read from the standing committee records of Friday, June 19, 1964, at page 283.

Mr. Pickersgill: 1964?

Mr. Hamilton: I will not read the entire statement, but only the relevant part:

I have given an undertaking on behalf of the government, so long as the present government is in office, that there will be no abandonment on the prairies of these branch lines until the legislation which is now before the house has been disposed of.

The reference was to Bill C-120. About that legislation you can argue, on strict interpretation, that once it was flung out it was disposed of. I have an exact quotation of the minister of September 2, 1966. I refer to unrevised *Hansard* of that date, page 8034. Some part of this I can leave out without falsifying the minister's intention.

Mr. Pickersgill: Would it not be better to quote it straight through?

Mr. Hamilton: Very well. I shall read more than I had intended. I did not wish to condemn the minister.

Mr. Pickersgill: I understand.

Mr. Hamilton: I was going on to something else. I quote:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is awfully good to let me intervene at this point to answer his question,—

This was when I had posed the terms under which we might consider passing second reading.

—and I appreciate it very much. I saw the presidents of the railways this morning, but for another reason. I took advantage of the meeting to ask them whether I might be permitted to say that on the very day on which this legislation passed they would withdraw all their existing applications for abandonment on the prairies and that they would revise their applications in the light of the decisions made by parliament and put forward in the legislation, not as it stands at the moment necessarily but as it emerges from the committee and is passed by parliament. I was given the authority of the presidents of the railways to say that that would be done.

That is a statement from the record of what the minister said.

In other words, all those applications which are in suspension, none of which is being proceeded with, will be withdrawn on the day the legislation