

Canadian National Railways

region of the Canadian National was at that time only from twenty-four to twenty-six days. I may say that the over-all position of the Canadian National was somewhat better than the twenty-four to twenty-six days which I have just indicated.

It is well known that there has been a series of work interruptions in United States mines from June, 1949, to the present time. There were work stoppages, vacation periods, a three-day-a-week work program, a fifty-one day strike, a walkout, and at the present time a general strike throughout United States coal fields since February 13.

While orders for the purchasing of United States coal have been held to a minimum in accordance with the government policy of the conservation of United States dollar expenditures, the actual orders placed for Canadian and United States coal generally would have been sufficient to meet requirements if regular deliveries had been maintained from the United States mines. Unfortunately such a condition did not prevail, and late in December the Canadian National had to curtail passenger train services in order to maintain coal supplies. The reduction in passenger train services put into effect totalled some 89,000 miles, bringing about an estimated reduction in coal consumption of approximately 1,000 tons per day. The passenger train miles which were cancelled were distributed as follows for the various regions:

Atlantic region	13,700
Central region	45,800
Western region	26,300
United States lines	3,200

The development of the labour disputes in the United States mines, and the interruption of coal deliveries, found the Canadian National with an inadequate stockpile position, and action had to be taken to conserve system stockpiles and use them to the best advantage so as to reduce public inconvenience to a minimum. I am firmly convinced that the precautionary measure taken by the Canadian National to reduce temporarily passenger train services by 25 per cent was fully warranted by the conditions which I have described, and I also believe that it was only fair that all sections of Canada should be treated in the same way so far as the reduction in passenger train services was concerned.

It is most unfortunate that the situation which I have reviewed culminated in a temporary reduction in the Canadian National passenger train services. I can assure the house that as soon as the coal supply situation improves, the passenger train services which have been curtailed will be reinstated. I wish also to assure the house that at no time did the management of the Canadian National consider reducing its passenger train services

[Mr. Chevrier.]

with a view to financial economies. On the contrary the reduction in passenger train services was resorted to in order to conserve the dwindling coal stocks, and to prevent, if possible, subsequent greater reduction in train services, as happened in the case of the railways in the United States.

Mr. Graydon: I should like to ask a supplementary question which is being asked by many people, including the employees of the Canadian National Railways. While train services are being curtailed by the Canadian National, apparently the Canadian Pacific has plenty of coal. Surely there should be some explanation of this error in judgment on the part of the Canadian National management, as a result of which the Canadian Pacific is said to be now getting a great deal more business.

Mr. Chevrier: I tried to bring that out in the statement I have just made; but I would say that the positions of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific in this country are entirely different. The main mileage of the Canadian Pacific is in western Canada, whereas the greater part of the mileage of the Canadian National is in central Canada, Ontario and Quebec. Speaking from memory, I believe the Canadian National have some 11,000 miles of railway east of Manitoba, as opposed to some 5,600 miles operated by the Canadian Pacific. In other words, for the most part the Canadian Pacific is operating in a region where there are coal mines, whereas the Canadian National is operating in central Canada where there are none.

Mr. Brooks: I should like to know if it would not be possible to get more coal from the maritime provinces, and why more coal was not obtained there by the Canadian National Railways.

Mr. Chevrier: That is a question which it would require some little time to answer in detail. Generally speaking, however, the Canadian National is taking from the maritime provinces, as well as from western Canada, all the coal it can get at the moment.

Mr. Brooks: That is not the impression in the maritimes.

Mr. Chevrier: Even if the Canadian National had taken all the coal it could have obtained in 1949 in the maritime provinces and in western Canada, the present position would have been no different.

Mr. Isnor: Can the minister tell us what quantity of the 2,365,000 tons of coal in the stockpile came from the United States and what quantity came from Canadian mines?

Mr. Chevrier: I am sorry, but I have not that information at my fingertips.