

*CNR and Air Canada*

up in the red, and there is seldom any change in the amount of money requested.

In fact, this year, Bill C-4 asks the authorization to provide \$219 million. This we read on page 2 of the bill and I quote:

Estimated requirements in the calendar year 1971:

Last year, Bill C-186 asked for \$229 million, reflecting a small \$10 million difference.

We recall that, surprisingly, in 1968 the CN was granted government authorization to cross out a debt of \$371 million—the amount it owed to its employees' pension fund.

Mr. Speaker, when debts of \$371 million disappear thus, the amount becomes net profits. So I would like to know from the CN, through the minister who is piloting this bill today, how this amount of \$371 million will be included in the budget.

I would like to know whether the Canadian National intends to add those \$371 million to its assets at the rate of \$70 million during a five-year period or to show \$371 million as profit on a single balance sheet.

Speaking of CN balance sheets, an important item in my opinion is that of the debt charges appearing in the annual report of the company under "Total interests on debt".

I imagine, Mr. Speaker, that the officials of the company do their utmost to maintain the operations at an economic level. If such is the case, these officials could prove us that they are responsible by looking for less costly procedures than those they are using at the present time.

If we compare the balance sheets of the last years, we find that in 1952, the debt charges amounted to \$25,415,000 in comparison with \$75 million in 1970.

Mr. Speaker, the CN debt tripled in less than twenty years. I think this is absolutely abnormal. In addition to that, while we are on the subject of credits, there is one point I would like to make and it has to do with the maintenance of the tracks.

Keeping in mind the number of derailments that took place on CN tracks, we must ask ourselves a question to which the answer is readily found. Since it is a Crown company, we can assume that some incompetent people hold important positions. I think unexperienced employees are the cause of several accidents that happened recently. They are employees who obtained their positions without knowing exactly what a railroad is all about, employees who have no practical knowledge and think that railroad lines need no maintenance.

It is true, Mr. Speaker, that construction methods have changed. A railroad line can be rapidly built because of heavy equipment that can do a lot of work in little time. Even if it is easy to build railroad lines, I think we must keep in mind the fact that they still need to be maintained.

Twenty years ago, a team of five men maintained ten miles of rail. Today, the same team of five must maintain 50 miles of rail, which is physically impossible. The number of accidents since the beginning of the year, in a radius of 125 miles around Quebec City alone, is proof that the security limit has been exceeded.

[Mr. Godin.]

For the information of the minister in charge, I will make a summary of those accidents. I think all hon. members read it in the newspapers. The first derailment since the beginning of the year happened in Val Jalbert, causing inconvenience to passengers and leaving two locomotives overturned. Recently, Rapido No. 20 left the tracks with 125 passengers on board, which left one dead and one seriously injured who died a few hours later from a heart attack. On the same day, at Edward Lake, 22 cars left the track. At about the same time, in Donnacona, while the trains were running in front of the snowplow, the train became stuck and the Quebec-Abitibi passenger train was cancelled.

Near Quebec City, around Ste-Foy, there was another derailment. In Grand'Mère, 17 cars left the tracks. In Eatonville, in the county of Kamouraska, 51 cars left the tracks and damages were estimated at \$6 million. More recently, in Fitzpatrick, there was another derailment in a tunnel and traffic was delayed for twelve hours.

Mr. Speaker, if I said the public is beginning to have second thoughts about the security of CN tracks, I think the people would say I am right. If we discussed with CN officials all the serious accidents that have happened since the beginning of the year, I am convinced that there would certainly be some of them who would say it is due to the rough climate. Mr. Speaker, if CN trains were the only ones running in the country, I think we could really believe that the climate would be the cause of those accidents.

• (1650)

By the way, another company is in the same field and that is the Canadian Pacific whose trains operate also in the same area under the same climate, except that the Canadian Pacific is privately-owned and that its authorities are concerned with their responsibilities.

To bluff the public, they make believe, through some minor layoffs, that management is sound, since they thus achieve savings of a few thousands of dollars. But at the same time, security has been ignored, which has caused damages of several million dollars. This is not, in my mind, what we can call sound management.

Yesterday again, the CNR management have met at their Quebec City office with representatives of the municipalities of the county of Portneuf. The purpose of this meeting was to try to bring the mayors of the county to accept the closing down of some stations in the district concerned. If some stations are closed, station masters and wireless operators will automatically lose their jobs.

It is rather strange, Mr. Speaker, that, for the past ten days, because of bad weather conditions, those station masters, who are to be dismissed shortly, have worked as much as 18 hours a day, and those are the people that the CN is on the point of dismissing.

If anyone here understands this, I would like to meet him. I for one cannot understand how people who have to work 18 hours a day can be dismissed. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this company has become the business of a few people only.

Railway workers, I repeat, have been dismissed; station masters are being dismissed; the number of clients contin-