

Adjournment Debate

per cent of total production compared to 29.9 per cent in 1979, a drop of 15 per cent.

While I do not have an analysis of the impact of free trade negotiation on broiler hatching egg production, its effect would be, at most, the removal of the tariffs. Canadian farmers have been generally increasing their share of the domestic market because of the high quality of their products and their proximity to markets.

● (1805)

[English]

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS—FUTURE OF RAILWAY LINES IN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC. REPORTED ABANDONMENT OF EFFORT TO ATTRACT NEW TRAFFIC

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, on December 16 in this House I raised an issue with regard to Canadian National Railways which is of great regional importance to the Ottawa Valley and, indeed, all of eastern Ontario and part of western Quebec. It dealt with the issue of a document by CN Rail, dated September 25, 1986, which was brought to the attention of the Standing Committee on Transport last fall. It listed a number of lines that would be closed.

To our great dismay, it mentioned the Beachburg subdivision, which is the 163.9 mile section of the main line of the CN track from Ottawa to the hamlet of Brent, in the middle of Algonquin Park. It also mentioned the Alexandria subdivision, which is a distance of 57.7 miles from Glen Robertson, just inside the Ontario-Quebec border west of Montreal, to the City of Ottawa.

There is one very serious problem with this. It is that over the past number of years, Canadian Pacific Railway, whose line also goes up the Ottawa Valley, has been using the CN track between Ottawa and Montreal. If CN abandons its rail line between Ottawa and Glen Robertson, the Alexandria subdivision, of course CP will have no line on which to run. Not only would we in the eastern and southern part of Ontario lose the main line of CN, we would also lose the main line of Canadian Pacific. It will mean that the whole region from the Ontario-Quebec border near Montreal, right through to North Bay, will have no rail traffic at all. That is unacceptable.

On December 16, I asked a question about this of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie). After laying the groundwork, I said, as reported at page 2162 of *Hansard*:

Is the Minister prepared to guarantee to Canadians that he will not abandon the regions of this country in favour of the large urban areas and the coffers of the CNR?

The Minister of Transport stood up and said:

Mr. Speaker, that is a guarantee that any Member of this House would be pleased to give. I certainly give it. My guarantee is that whether it is CN, CP, BCR or any other railway, they will not be allowed to abandon any rail lines, branch lines, main lines, any line or anything with iron upon which a train runs, without going through the proper procedures, without applying to the Canadian Transport Commission and without going through every last letter of the law.

That answer does not mean a thing. It may sound like a great answer, in that flashy fashion of the Minister in the House, but of course we know that those companies must go through the Canadian Transport Commission. It was simply a non-answer.

What is really disturbing is that at a meeting on January 14, 1987, a month after I asked the question in the House, CN put out yet another document. The document stated that "for the purposes of the preparation of the tactical plan", meaning the closing of the lines, "the following are the most likely possible outcomes of some rationalization alternatives currently under study by the rationalization task force of CN as of January 14, 1987". The document went on to state: "These alternatives are in addition to strategy invoked, with shedding traffic on 2,500 miles of the light density network". About 275 miles of that is in eastern Ontario.

● (1810)

It then went on to mention the Alderdale and Beachburg subdivisions. The Alderdale subdivision is that part of the main line of CN from Brent in Algonquin Park through to Capreol near Sudbury.

I will refer to what it says about the Beachburg line from Ottawa through to Capreol, including Alderdale. It states that the Steering Committee meeting discussed on January 14 assume no maintenance requirement from Portage du Fort, which is in the County of Pontiac in Quebec, effective January, 1988. It goes on to state that a section of the main line around North Bay will become industrial trackage, approximately 15 miles, and Ottawa-Portage du Fort will probably only have weigh freight services required on the same date.

This means that they will even withdraw the maintenance of the rail line, which will lead to more rail accidents.

● (1815)

Apropos to this, if this main line closes, it will mean that there will be something in the neighbourhood of 4,500 cars from one plant alone, the papermill at Portage du Fort, which will be thrown onto the highways of eastern Ontario and western Quebec. It is estimated that 14,000 transports will be required to haul what is now being hauled out of there by CN. That is only one. We have three more plants in Pembroke and a couple in Arnprior and the Renfrew subdivision which require service.

This is a very serious regional issue and we want more than the non-answers of the Minister of Transport. The railways of this country were built to serve the regions. Are we going to continue to say they are only going to exist if they run between the major centres? It is 192 miles farther from Montreal to Capreol, near Sudbury, via Toronto, where the main line with all this traffic will then go, and only 410 miles, 192 miles less from Montreal to Capreol. Hundreds and hundreds of carloads of chemicals and hazardous products are now being shipped over CN Rail. The CN plans to close down this rail line in