

RAILWAYS—CARRIAGE OF DANGEROUS GOODS THROUGH TORONTO

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, I wish tonight to take Members back for a few moments to the great Mississauga train derailment of a few years ago. I know that you can recall the time, Mr. Speaker, just as vividly as I can and just as vividly as can the people of Mississauga, the people from Metropolitan Toronto and the people from the areas surrounding Metropolitan Toronto. This was a great jolt to the people of Mississauga, Metropolitan Toronto and the surrounding areas.

● (1740)

Before the Mississauga train derailment, there had been on a number of occasions in the past in Canada and in the United States—and, for that matter, in other parts of the world—other catastrophes of this sort where there were chemical spills, explosions, fires and great devastation as a result of train derailments. I suppose we in the Metropolitan Toronto area felt that this kind of thing could never happen to us. Perhaps we were asleep at the switch and were not paying too much attention. But, certainly, the Mississauga train derailment jolted our attention. It caused all of us to reappraise the situation and think for the first time about what could really happen in these cases.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that at the time of the Mississauga derailment we were faced with, first, an explosion, then a fire, then the escaping of chlorine gas which caused the evacuation of a great many people. In fact, 225,000 people in Mississauga were evacuated for a period of some six days. That, of course, changed the way in which the people of Metropolitan Toronto and the surrounding area thought about this whole problem. Many citizens immediately became concerned and, as a result, organized a variety of citizen groups to try to deal with the situation and spearhead some changes in the law. Second, they inspired local Government to become concerned enough to try to bring about some changes. Third, the provincial Government was inspired to get involved as well. Finally, of course, pressure was put on the federal Government of the day to investigate the situation to see what could be done.

Out of all that came the Grange Royal Commission of Inquiry which looked into the Mississauga disaster. During its investigation it found a great many individual problems with the transportation of dangerous goods and commodities through the Metropolitan area. One of the major problems it found was that dangerous goods were in effect being shunted back and forth through the heart of Metropolitan Toronto, not for any specific purpose, but just because it was convenient for the train to take the goods through Metro Toronto, bring them back and then, perhaps, take them back and forth three or four times before they were marshalled on to their ultimate destination, which may have been western Canada.

Out of the Grange Report came a number of recommendations, many of which have already been dealt with. But there is still a major problem because there are still many carloads of

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dangerous commodities being shunted back and forth through the heart of densely-populated Metropolitan Toronto every day of the year. That is of particular concern to my constituents because the train derailment in Mississauga was only about 30 minutes away from the heart of my constituency. My constituency has the main lines of two of the major railways the CPR and the CNR, running right through the Don Valley which cuts through the middle of my constituency and I suspect there are dangerous goods being transported on those rail lines right at this very moment. Obviously, that is of concern.

The backyards of some of my constituents about the railway right-of-way and if anything happens they would certainly be in the front line of a disaster. But it is not just the people whose backyards about this area who have a problem, it is everyone within one or two miles of the area. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, we can have something called a "bleavy" when there is a derailment of a train carrying dangerous goods which causes an explosion that perhaps can cover one or two miles, devastating and wiping out the population in that area.

What can be done about that? There are a number of things which can be done and right now the Toronto Board of Education is doing one of those things, that is, carrying out evacuation drills. It is teaching the children how to evacuate the schools in the event of a spill of chemical materials near a railway track.

There are other things which can be done as well. The speed at which the trains are moving could be slowed down. There could be a rerouting of those trains and in fact a relocating of the rail lines themselves. Recently, there have been a couple of inquiries by the Railroad Transport Committee of the Canadian Transport Commission which is looking into the situation. There was one in Metropolitan Toronto where it was decided that nothing would be done, and another in Vancouver and Victoria where it was decided that as of the 1st of January the transportation of dangerous goods through the high-density areas of Vancouver and Victoria would be banned.

It is time we addressed this problem in Metropolitan Toronto. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that on December 4, I asked the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) what he was doing about the situation. He indicated in reply that he intended to set up a task force to deal with the problem. That task force, we hope, will be forthcoming before the end of the year. I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary tonight will be able to tell us when we are going to have that task force, what the terms of reference will be, whether it is going to deal with the question of rerouting or relocation and whether it will deal with the question of speed.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this is the Christmas season. It is the season of hope, and I trust that the Parliamentary Secretary will give us hope tonight for a safer 1986. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that one of the citizen groups which has been dealing with this matter in Metropolitan Toronto, MTRAC, or the Metropolitan Toronto Residents Action Committee, is looking for some answers, as are all of the people in