

Question No. 3: How much did it cost the respective departments to provide this material in those years? Question No. 4: How much of a saving could be realized by these departments, apart from mailing costs, if these unsolicited services to newspapers were cancelled?

When I received the answers to these questions—and I will not go into detail on the answers at this time—I was perplexed. The 18 departments which replied admitted spending \$74,331.15 on these materials. Some departments noted that their figures did not include labour costs because they considered such work to be a routine part of their staff's duties. But this was an essential part of the information I requested. So the actual cost would, I think, be substantially more than the \$74,331.15 of which I was informed.

Mr. Patrick Nicholson, feature columnist for the Thompson group of newspapers, did a survey of some 40-odd newspapers on this subject which revealed that this unsolicited material was used only rarely, that any important news that it contains is disseminated immediately by the Canadian Press wire service, and that in any event many of the releases were received too late to be of any value.

When you receive material that you do not ask for, do not want and do not need, you throw it out. It is what is called junk, and I would classify this as junk mail. In my opinion it is an insult to good business practices. Supporting this viewpoint are the findings of the task force on information which reported to the government last November. It issued a damning indictment of the information apparatus dispensing publicity for the myriad of departments and agencies that make up the federal government. The report said that the apparatus was characterized by duplication, incompetence and outright bungling, and it implied that its \$148 million annual cost is almost a total waste.

Armed with these facts I went to Information Canada and laid this information before them. I had the impression that Information Canada agreed that this was a profitless way of communicating. I sincerely hope that the government will consider and support this viewpoint. I am not saying that this information should not be produced or should not be sent out, but I maintain that a mechanism must and should be found to make it more selective.

This government has urged the farmers, the industrialists and the businessmen of Canada to diversify. The government does not have to urge our national railroads to do this because that is exactly what they are doing. They are diversifying to the point where they have forgotten what their prime purpose is—to provide transportation of all types to the Canadian people. What disturbs me about this situation is that we, Members of Parliament, have very little to say about it. When people in my riding ask me: "What about the CNR, they are doing this and they are doing that", I have to admit to them that I have virtually no control over the activities of this government corporation. Yet every year the CNR comes hat in hand looking for money from the Canadian taxpayer,

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and we, the Members of Parliament, are asked to approve these appropriations.

I would like now to outline some of the problems being faced in my riding that are caused by the CNR. In Oakville we have numerous railway crossings. Three of them in particular, on Kerr Street, Chartwell Road, and the Ninth Line, are causing motorists especially much concern as trains are blocking these crossings a large percentage of the time and it is very difficult to lay a charge against the railroads for blocking a crossing for over five minutes. This is something that we could rectify by strengthening the governing legislation. Not only is this annoying but there is a safety hazard involved because located near the railway crossing on Chartwell Road in Oakville is a fire station. If a train were stopped on that crossing for a considerable length of time, not only could it have but it would have an effect on the fire engines and other fire-fighting apparatus getting to the place where they were required.

● (12:10 p.m.)

I move along, Mr. Speaker, to another community in Halton, the town of Milton, where some years ago the CNR built a bypass around the town. They required much fill in order to lay the tracks. What did the CNR do in this case? They opened up a pit and laid to waste approximately 60 acres of land. They broke every rule of conservation. When they were finished it was nothing but a wasteland. It used to be reasonably good farm land.

What happened when it rained? The top soil had been removed, and so the rain worked its way down to a pond which had been built as Milton's centennial project in Centennial Park. There are fish in that pond, Mr. Speaker. This pollution, and that is what it is, cannot help but have a detrimental effect on the life of the fish in the pond. In addition to making the pond a very unsightly place, what was once clear water now becomes very murky after a rain storm and takes days to clear up.

When this was brought to the attention of the CNR what did they do? They said, "We are not responsible for this; in no way can we be blamed for this," when in fact, Mr. Speaker, the blame lay firmly with them. I personally took up this matter with the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) whose department prosecutes—maybe that is too strong a word—looks after or investigates pollution caused by Crown corporations. The people of Milton and I are most grateful to him for his fast action. He sent out some of his officials and they looked at the situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry I have to rise to inform the hon. member that under the rules his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous agreement that the hon. member continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.