

supplied by the express service, to cut back or to cut out telecommunications, and to let maintenance go to hell.

The railways are moving more merchandise than they ever have moved before; freight movements have increased every year, and yet the number of employees has been reduced each year from a high in the 1950's of 160,000 employees, down to less than 100,000, about 95,000 people now, 25 years later.

The cutback in express service means that the users, people who want to move merchandise in less than carload lots, will be forced to use the alternative of either trucks or air. I do not have to tell members of the House that both trucks and aircraft use much larger amounts of fuel, of oil and gasoline, to move merchandise than do the railways. So the CNR, in order to be penny wise is being pound foolish in terms of the country as a whole.

What this desire to show a profit means is that the CNR will concentrate on providing service in such high density areas as Ontario and western Canada, but in the Maritimes or in eastern Quebec the service will be poor, to say the least. There is evidence that because merchandise will not move until a freight car is completely filled, it will wait anywhere from 15 to 30 days.

Another feature of the CNR cutback in service, which has led to the reduction in staff, is the complete failure of the CNR and CPR to give thought to safety. Investigations made by the Canadian Transport Commission in 1970 and 1972 demonstrated that completely. There has been an alarming rise in accidents caused by poor track conditions. In 1972 the number of derailments was three times that in 1959 and nearly double that in 1969, according to studies done by the Canadian Transport Commission.

In comparison to modern railways systems, Canadian railways show an unusually high rate of accidents and casualties. In 1972 Canadian railways, that is, the CNR and CPR, experienced 12 times the number of derailments, three times the number of collisions, and six times the number of collisions and derailments that occurred on French railways per train-kilometer. The losses in life injuries were also heavy; 15 times higher than in France among railway personnel, and 70 per cent higher among passengers. The same trend prevailed in 1971 and 1973.

● (1817)

I believe it is the responsibility of the Minister of Transport to see that the railways operate efficiently, that they provide service to the people of Canada, and that they take time and effort and spend money to see that the kind of accident experience we have had in recent years stops. They have not done that, and I call on the Minister of Transport to exercise his responsibility and see that the CNR does the job it should be doing.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Olivier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) for his question.

Adjournment Debate

Initially, the question asked was about the advisability of appointing a commission of inquiry to look into the 6,000 lay-offs of Canadian National Railways employees.

The problem was submitted to us after discussions with the representatives of the Canadian National Railways union and it was decided that we had better deal with the general question of lay-offs in Canada.

I think the hon. member is concerned with one specific union or one specific industry. What we want is an over-all view of the present lay-off situation.

I will give a very specific example: Recently INCO decided on drastic and immediate lay-offs. Another example is that of Northern Telecom which has reduced its payroll recently.

I think the department had rather make a general study of lay-off procedure, and appoint an industrial commission of inquiry to provide ways and means to protect industry and labour unions from situations such as those which have developed lately.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind you that as far as we are concerned the issue is not only our Canadian National Railways, it is a far more general one. What we want in the final analysis is to deal with the problem which the CN people and many other Canadians have been facing, and carefully examine all specific cases before adopting a general policy which will enable us, in the future, to cope with situations such as the one which confronts us now.

[English]

TRANSPORT—SUGGESTED INCREASE IN FEDERAL SHARE OF COST OF IMPROVING TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, after many approaches to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) on the drastic need for a highway strengthening program in Newfoundland I want to attempt again to elaborate on my question of November 22.

In his reply the minister again refused to consider the provision of a more generous cost-sharing arrangement than the original 50-50 offer. I wonder why he is so adamant in his decision when he is so aware of the basic facts of Newfoundland's needs and if he believes in the objective of providing for the development of Newfoundland through a basic transportation system to gain social and economic benefits. Developing our rich resources would benefit not just the province of Newfoundland but Canada as a whole.

What has happened in Newfoundland? The basic facts show that we are now at a critical stage of our domestic transportation system. We are at a point in time when a fundamental decision has to be made as to the basic requirements of the transportation infrastructure for the benefit of the province.

In Newfoundland we had a rail passenger service which was taken away. This was justified by serious losses. The federal government built a fourth-standard Trans-Canada Highway, with false political fanfare. There was then provided a bus passenger transportation service, which is now losing more