

Railway Rights-of-Way

I would like to go back to the CPR agreement. The CPR was to provide passenger service to this country in perpetuity. I happened to be on a CPR train on the very day the CPR acted to break this agreement. The service went plastic that day, the people who worked on that train said that the intention was to discourage passenger travel and that the railway would like to enter exclusively into the very lucrative field of freight traffic. We in the west know what freight means. It is very costly. We have always suffered from the discrimination of the railway system and inequitable freight rates.

That day on the train I saw the unilateral ending of the pact. The linen was taken off the tables, and the whole train turned cold. It was a very uncomfortable train, and everybody on that train knew that that was the beginning of the end, at the very time when railway travel could have solved our energy concerns and could have provided effective mass transit throughout this country.

Everyone knows the difficulties involved with that early construction, but the subsidy in the agreement was \$25 million, a grant of 25 million acres of land, in alternate sections of 640 acres in a belt 24 miles deep on each side of the railroad. Even then they allowed for deficiencies in the fertile lands which were made up for with extra land. In British Columbia about 3 per cent of our land is said to be arable. B.C. is a rocky part of the country, yet here we gave away so much of that arable land—extra land if it was not arable—to the CPR.

By 1950 the CPR was big diversified business. It has become one of the big businesses to which the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) referred in his Christmas message of 1975 when he said that big business, big government, and big unions were destroying the free market system. These big entities control much of this country, and no government can control them. I suspect if we were ever to implement the motion of the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary we would find that we are not big enough—not as big as the CPR and all its subsidiaries to do a thing.

CPR has developed and exploited our natural resources. There are steamships, telecommunications and hotels. The CPR operates its track. It is into trucking, ships, airlines and piggy-back transportation. The CPR has modern fleets of container ships and pipelines. It is involved with leasing, hotels and real estate. With regard to real estate we in Vancouver know Marathon Realty very well. The CPR is involved with oil and gas, mining and forest products.

The point I really want to make has to do with land. Marathon Realty has exploited the land it received free to its own excessive profits. It is said that almost all of Vancouver was once or is owned by Marathon Realty. That was the free land the railway received from Canada. Today Marathon Realty is building condominiums where once there were golf courses and green spaces. Not one inch of that would Marathon return to the citizens of Vancouver or Canada or to the citizens of the other communities where Marathon now owns land. Marathon is without social conscience. It charged the full price to the city when the city wanted a little strip of green space out of Marathon's developments. This has happened

[Mrs. Holt.]

throughout the city and throughout this country. For example, in one condominium development—which is on free land—Marathon charged \$56,000 per unit, and I am sure land in Vancouver makes up half or almost half the cost of any real estate development. Within three or four months these units were selling at \$83,000, a profit of \$27,000. There had been no labour increases. There had been no real inflation in materials, in lumber, etc. yet the prices went up. These same units are said to sell for \$110,000 to \$132,000 now, only three years later, and not an inch of land has been given back to the community.

That is more than just abandonment. It is use of property for non-railway purposes. The CPR is a railway, and I hope the day will come when there is action to retrieve the land before it has all gone into real estate development. With the housing developments in the west and their charging of unnecessarily high prices—considering the free land—Marathon Realty contributed greatly to inflation in the city of Vancouver. When prices go up to that extent, it is a contributor to inflation.

Mr. Yewchuk: Have you lost your page?

Mrs. Holt: I do not read my speeches. Some of you do.

I want to close with one thought. I had to look for the thought because it is not my own. I have no trouble finding my own thoughts. It is more difficult to find other people's thoughts. Theodore Roosevelt once said that a man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car—this is appropriate to a railway debate—but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad. A big business like CP can steal the whole land.

This whole country rose up against the Prime Minister and said he was trying to destroy the free enterprise system when he warned in December, 1975, that big business, big unions, and big government were destroying the free market system. They should have said "go to it," because at that time we saw that big business, oil cartels, coffee cartels, Marathon Realty and CPR were manipulating our whole society. That great labour union leader Joe Morris was going to call a national strike to stop the country for a day for his own purposes. We saw that beyond this Chamber, small business was—and is—being controlled and manipulated through big government regulations. We saw all that, and instead of misleading the public on what the Prime Minister was saying, we should have fought together to have all that changed, and stopped the power of the "Bigs". This motion at that time would have been part of the important change which is essential to Canada.