

*Summer Recess*

I think my colleague, the hon. member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin), in asking a question of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) the other day, summed up the attitude of the CPR when it was running passenger service on Vancouver Island, and also what VIA Rail, because of lack of budgeting and lack of finances, has done. The hon. member for Regina West says that if a passenger train is run old enough, late enough, slow enough, and dirty enough, no one will get on it and the route can be abandoned.

That is exactly what the CPR was doing, to the extent that it allowed two railway trestles north of Parksville to become so worn out and so unsafe that there was no service over those trestles. The CPR had no intention to repair that bridge until the CTC required it to do so.

If one does not want people to ride on one's rail system, one does what has been done on the E & N. We essentially have a rail system which can be considered to be a heritage rail system. The stations were built in the early 1900s. The plaster is chipping off the walls. They may have had paint. It is doubtful if they have had new roofs. However, if we want to make it a tourist attraction on Vancouver Island, and I think there are some possibilities to use that railway system for the tourist industry, we already have railway stations which were built in the early 1900s.

Another way to prevent people from using the railway system so as to abandon it, as is likely to occur, is to not let anyone know when the trains are running, or run them in such a direction that the traffic flow at that time of the day is opposite to the direction of the train. That is being done on Vancouver Island.

In 1976, there were 6,585 people who used the E & N bud car, a single car. In 1977 11,000 people used it. I can understand why the CPR was asking for abandonment of this rail line. In 1977 there was an increase in passenger service and use of that train to 11,343. In 1978, when the railway union and people became aware of what was happening and that there was a real danger of losing that system, and publicity became prevalent about the E & N, the number of passengers rate went from 11,000 in 1977 to almost 44,000 in 1978. When people understood that there was a system and were interested in taking a trip from Victoria to Courtenay, to see the beautiful Vancouver Island scenery, in 1979 that passenger service provided service for 57,000 people. So it increased, from 6,000 people in 1976 to over 57,000 in 1979 because people knew there was passenger service. In one year the CPR spent \$175 advertising that service.

There is all kinds of other information and evidence to indicate why people were not using it. One of the problems with the E & N railway is the speed at which the trains travel. The track bed, the rail, the ballasts and the ties are so bad that for safety, in some parts of that route, passenger trains are down to five miles per hour, in many places 10 and 20 miles per hour, and the maximum is 40 miles per hour. That is an indication both of a desire to discourage people from using rail service in Canada, particularly on Vancouver Island, and

second, it is an indication of how poor the track is and how poor the CPR has been at maintaining the track bed.

Hearings were held in Nanaimo in March of 1980, at the insistence of myself and other groups within the community. Representatives from the CPR, the RTC, represented by the Vancouver regional director, Mr. Jim Eisler, people from the community, including fire departments, municipal councils, regional board directors, union people, ecological alliance people, and the E & N steering committee president or chairman made representations about the track and the desire to maintain the track and rail service.

Coming from that meeting was a very comprehensive report done by Mr. Eisler of the RTC. The report was submitted November 1, 1980. It is called "A Report on Certain Engineering Aspects of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway". We were informed that this would be one of the more comprehensive reports on any rail track bed taken in Canada. It was a kind of pilot project to do a detailed study of that track bed and relate that to standards and safety standards of rail systems. Mr. Eisler made some recommendations to the Railway Transport Commission in Ottawa dealing with derailments. I quote as follows:

There are no readily discernible trends as regards frequency of occurrence, however it has been noted that oscillatory behaviour of equipment has been a factor in four of the last seven reportable derailments on the E & N.

Oscillation occurs at certain speeds on rails systems, and often at very slow speeds. Four of the last seven derailments on that system have been because of harmonic oscillation. Trains are going very slowly because of safety factors. Because they are reduced to that speed, they are going so slow that the wheels of the train virtually creep off the track and derail that train. That is the kind of track condition we had on Vancouver Island. Because of this report, there have been some improvements.

Much of the track is 80 or 85-pound rail which was installed in 1900, and it was designed for much lighter cars than those which are going over the track now. Some of the big tank cars carrying propane, caustic soda and other hazardous goods are in the 22,000 pound range and they are not built to go over tracks of 80 to 85 pounds.

● (1900)

Most people on Vancouver Island are concerned about the ties. As one walks down the rail line it can be seen that ties and spikes are defective. A lot of reports made to the meeting in Nanaimo referred to those ties. We appreciate the attention paid by the CTC to the residents of Vancouver Island who expressed concern about safety.

The CTC report of November 20, 1980, had the following to say about ties:

Sampling has indicated that prior to the commencement of the 1980 work season there were well in excess of 200,000 defective track ties in place on the E & N. It was determined that 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the trackage did not comply with CP "in house guidelines" for permissible defective ties and that about 4 per cent of the trackage did not meet FRA safety standards when such criteria were applied for comparative purposes.