

value in the property ultimately to be abandoned are likely to be in the interim enhanced by some degree of rehabilitation involving new investment of funds.

We deem it, therefore, eminently just and equitable that in return for permanent relief from their legal obligation to continue a losing operation and of having to restore the abandoned right-of-way to its former condition, the privilege of being allowed to abandon should be made conditional upon giving up ownership of the land in the right-of-way. A substantial portion of this land is quite valueless in any event. There should be no crying over the return of rights-of-way to the Crown.

That is what the Hall Commission had to say about railway abandonment, and I agree with them 100 per cent.

There are five major reasons why abandoned railway right-of-way property should revert to the Crown, whether it be to the federal or provincial government: first, the selling of these rights-of-way would effectively close transportation corridors that may well be needed in future years; second, the Government of Canada has made monumental concessions to the railways in this country: land and tax benefits were freely given to the railways in return for cross-Canada transportation service, and now when these lines are abandoned the property should revert to the government as partial payment for those early concessions; third, through a CPR subsidy company, Marathon Realty, large sums of money are being made from the roughly one million acres of land still held which was originally granted by the federal government to the CPR; fourth, the Canadian Pacific Railway's original mandate was to provide transportation on an ongoing basis to all parts of Canada and that mandate is no longer followed; and fifth, through abandonment, the railway companies are making large financial gains selling property at the expense of the Canadian people.

In conclusion, I should like to point out once again that the Hall Commission report, compiled at the request of the Minister of Transport, supports my stand on rail abandonment. Railways are no longer only interested in transportation. For instance, the CPR is not merely a railroad company, but a huge conglomerate controlling a number of enterprises ranging from mining to air travel, from logging to pipelines. Also the company has investments in almost all major industries. One only has to look at the television ads to see this.

It is our responsibility to keep these transportation corridors open. It is a responsibility of the government to the people of Canada. We have to prepare the future for our children and grandchildren. I may never see the end of fossil fuels in my lifetime, but my children probably will. The importance of these transportation corridors will be evident then. We have to get ready for the future.

I appeal to the House to pass this resolution which I feel will correct an unfair situation caused by the attitudes taken by the railways on the abandonment of branch lines.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my compatriot from British Columbia, the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Whittaker), for introducing this motion, one which has concerned me for many

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years as a person who lives in the farthest western reaches of Canada.

As he said, the C.P. is no longer a railroad, which is the reason for its existence. In fact the railroad might simply be called a "front" for its exploitation of other interests in this country. The railroad is simply there to further CP's money-making, and I would go so far as to say greed. Like the hon. member, I know the reputation of the railway, specifically the Canadian Pacific, which has taken so much of what should be the property of Canadians. I would rather strongly say it is almost like Scrooge who would clobber Tiny Tim, even after the insight of Christmas future!

I support strongly this motion which could lead the government to amend section 88 of the Railway Act, causing the railway rights-of-way, originally obtained through subsidies, to revert to the Crown when they are no longer in use as a railway and for railway purposes. I would go further than the hon. member and suggest, when they use the lands actively for other purposes, that they also revert to the Crown. The crucial words in this objective are: when they are no longer used for railway purposes.

No doubt in the 1880's it was an undertaking of almost inconceivable magnitude to span this huge land. Even today, with all our technology on land, air, and even in the stratosphere for communication purposes, with jet travel and satellite communication, it is difficult to unite this complex, diverse, huge land mass. It is basic to our present economic health and well-being, and possibly is causing our sociological trauma that we have not as yet succeeded in spanning this land. We have not done it with railways, not with communications, not with air travel. In fact, we are in the midst of fearing a national rupture because we have failed to link this land.

Canada is the second largest country in the world, consisting of 3,851,891 square miles. Our country is almost 4,000 miles across and 3,000 miles from north to south. We know how difficult it is, with a population of only 22 million, to link our country. How much more difficult it must have been in the 1880's in this sparsely populated, harsh, huge, unexplored, and frightening land. There were no great machines and technology then with which to build a railroad, yet a great railroad was built. There was an agreement at that time which, I maintain, as implied in the motion of the hon. member opposite, the CPR failed to live up to. It was an agreement to serve this nation and to give something to this nation in perpetuity.

● (1622)

This motion suggests that following the abandonment of branch line operations after CTC authorization has been obtained, lands originally obtained as a result of government subsidies for the purpose of railway rights-of-way should revert to the Crown. This suggestion runs counter to the Railway Act, but I agree that the Act can be changed.

It is said that this is a very complex problem with which to deal, but dealing with it properly would enrich Canada and solve perhaps even the problem of inflation, which I will explain in a few moments.