

*National Transportation Act, 1986*

calls a rationalization program, 1986-1996, concerning the St. Lawrence region. This is the region including Montreal, the Ottawa Valley and areas of northern Ontario. It is a devastating report. It starts off with the following words:

In the context of the rationalization of our rail infrastructure, some lines have been identified as being potential candidates for abandonment in the coming years. A preliminary plan has been prepared and attached you will find the sections affected.

Any effort to attract new traffic on these sections is to be abandoned immediately.

So CN wishes to discourage business to make it look as if the railway line is not needed. The report continues:

For the traffic already on these lines, we must consider either, and preferably, converting this traffic onto the intermodal system, or else, adjusting rates to minimize our present losses.

So if the company cannot discourage traffic on the lines it wants to close down, so says CN, then what it does is simply raise freight rates to the extent that nobody will use them, something which will be devastating to the regions of Canada. The report goes on to state:

You will shortly be convoked to a meeting in which the particulars of the application of these measures will be discussed in more detail. In the meantime, I would ask you to treat this with discretion.

In other words, "Keep it low-key, fellas. Don't blow the whistle and don't let anyone know what we're planning to do". When I asked the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) a question about this matter one day in the House he belittled my representation and more or less shoved it off to the side as if it were not important. Yet, the document to which I have referred concerns the main line of the CNR from Montreal to Ottawa, up the Ottawa Valley to North Bay and beyond. A major part of it, some 163 miles, is known as the Beachburg Subdivision. This does not only affect the regions of eastern Ontario and western Quebec but it affects other parts of Canada, for example the City of Toronto and the large urban areas of southern Ontario where a great deal of this traffic will be headed if that line is closed down.

The Consolidated Bathurst Paper Mill at Portage-du-fort on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River receives and ships out approximately 4,500 railcars per year. Out of this amount, nearly 1,800 carry chemicals including chlorine, caustic soda, bunker oil, to name just a few. The concern is that if the railroads are looking to all these chemicals being transported over our provincial highways, then with the abandonment of the line servicing this mill it is a certainty that the goods will have to be shipped over the provincial highways. I do not think that the Governments of the Province of Ontario and Quebec have any choice but to enter into this issue to save that CN line and ensure that it stays in place.

Local fire and police departments in the area of this mill are not equipped to handle a major spill of chlorine if one were to occur as a result of a transport accident. Some municipal fire departments have done excellent jobs of upgrading themselves. A great many of them are volunteer fire departments and they still send their members away on courses. They can handle many of these situations. But to put this type of material into

these big transports on to highways in eastern Ontario and western Quebec, highways which are already overloaded, is not only unfair to the shippers but to the people of those areas. It will end up costing the two provincial Governments a fortune.

In conclusion, where will these 1,800 carloads go? They will go right through the built-up areas of Canada.

There are a great many things I have to say about the Bill but I see that you are giving me the signal that my time is almost up, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that I will be voting against the Bill because I think it is horrendous. I just wish that the Hon. Jack Pickersgill were back here putting some sanity into Canadian transportation policy.

**Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to take part in the debate this morning concerning an issue that is so fundamentally important to western Canada. I do not think it is any secret that I come from a region of Canada which is very much dependent on transportation. A large part of our industry is based on resource development. Many of the industries in my riding literally end up becoming captive shippers. As a result we are very keenly interested in the Bill which is before us. We feel it is fundamental to the development of the West, especially in terms of its economy. All the grain produced in our area has to be shipped out by rail. There are many difficulties surrounding these shipments. This debate is but a reminder that the number one problem we face in the Peace River country continues to be with respect to transportation.

I would like to give a specific example which illustrates the point I want to make in speaking to this Bill. In my riding I have a large lumber mill, the capacity of which is virtually incredible. It probably ranks as one of the top-producing mills in Canada. The only form of transportation available to this mill is one railway. What is the result of this situation? There is no competition. Thus the bottom line is very simple. The mill pays tremendous prices to ship out its lumber. But does this company have an alternative? The company has to provide a form of competition on its own. It has to truck out large amounts of its lumber, not because it is practical or economical, but because it is the only way there can be any form of competition which allows some leverage to bring down the prices the railway charges. In effect, artificial competition has to be created because of the present National Transportation Act. There is no opportunity for the competition that is so necessary. This Bill starts to deal with and address that problem.

• (1130)

The second item I wish to briefly touch upon, and which I think is very important to western Canada, is the whole issue of western coal. We have talked for some time now in the west about the coal there. It is high quality, low in acid emissions, and it is ideal coal for Ontario Hydro to use in the production of its power.