

tary, that is, a reference of the subject matter to the standing committee. I hope that disposition will be acceptable to the Member.

In his presentation to the House of Commons, the Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands made specific reference to the dangers that exist on the railway rights-of-way and spoke of the exposure of young children especially to toxics and poisons that might have been used in controlling foliage on rights-of-way. I would like to address some remarks very briefly to the continuing danger that exists with respect to railway rights-of-way. I would put higher on the list of priorities for actions not the toxics and poisons that might be used but the every-day danger of railway crossings, level crossings, that still exist across Canada. We have not changed for decades the law that controls railway level crossings and every day, in fact this very week unfortunately, there are tragic accidents. In the constituency of my colleague from New Brunswick, in Fundy-Royal, just the other day there was a tragic accident that involved a young boy who was walking along the railway tracks while listening to a Walkman. And of course this use of a Walkman interfered with his hearing. He was apparently unable to hear an approaching train, and even though the engineer responsible for the train saw the boy, knew that he had a Walkman in place and that his hearing was obscured, he could only react by blowing the whistle and attempting to apply the brakes unsuccessfully. The collision occurred and, unfortunately the boy was killed.

I could recite many other similarly tragic incidents. Just this summer, during July and August of this year, we had a tragic accident in my constituency in the village of Kinsac where young children at play after a while take the rail level crossing for granted, so to speak. That is, it becomes so much a part of their playground that they fail to realize that from time to time trains pass. They take no precautions because of the lack of traffic and then fail to notice the approach of a train, with tragic results as in that case in the village of Kinsac this summer. I am sure other Members could recite similar tragedies, and they will occur today, tomorrow and in the months hereafter unless some specific action is taken.

Certainly it is a costly matter to provide a solution to this kind of problem, but how do you measure that kind of cost against the tragic loss of life that we have experienced in all provinces, in all parts of Canada, as a result of railway crossing accidents? So if the Parliament of Canada is going to address the problem of safety on railway rights-of-way, if that ought to be and it is properly the concern of the House of Commons, then let us get at the big problems, let us not just get at the esoteric problems that may or may not occur, and particularly may occur at only parts of times of the year, but let us get at that day-to-day problem right across this country, the dangers that exist on railway crossings.

I say to the Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands that I do not mention that by way of criticism. I just mention that by way of the fact that there is a big job to be done, so that perhaps when the Transport Committee accepts the reference, which I hope the House of Commons will make today, it

will consider the broader problem of safety on railway rights-of-way right across the board, not simply with respect to health hazards but with respect to all aspects of safety.

### *Railway Act*

Let me just talk for a minute about the progress of the Canadian railway companies, that is to say those institutions that are in business for Canada, as the Canadian National Railways ad said, and just what they are doing, because I think the Member has accomplished one purpose in presenting this Bill C-229, and that is, to focus attention on what the railway companies are doing across Canada, what progress they have made. I will give you a good example, Mr. Speaker. The Saturday newspaper in the City of Halifax always carries a column "Thirty Years Ago Today". This past Saturday that column referred to a remarkable event that took place 30 years ago, and that was the institution of the *Ocean Limited* travelling between the City of Montreal and the City of Halifax. It was described as a hotel on wheels that only took 21 hours to transverse the distance from Halifax to Montreal. Do you know what the *Ocean Limited* takes today, 30 years later, in 1985, to transport itself from Halifax to Montreal? The same 21 hours, and on bad days, much longer. That is progress in the railway business in Canada. That is a company that is in business for Canada. It took 21 hours for this hotel on wheels to travel 700 miles in 1955 and in 1985 it takes a little longer, accounting for more and longer stops along the way. That is railway progress. It is present in the trains and in the situations which exist on the railway rights-of-way. We still have the dangers that exist on level crossings and other places.

• (1750)

If the Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands is reminding the House that Canadian railways, and in particular the Canadian National Railways, have not progressed a great deal in the last three decades, then his point is well taken. We have certainly seen a lack of progress. The same old trains are chugging back and forth between Halifax and Montreal. I know that efforts have been made to improve the rolling stock, but the fact is that the methods have been substantially unsuccessful. The result is that Canadians no longer use the train, which is one of the most important and effective means of transportation everywhere in the world except Canada. This is a progressive country. We have all kinds of technology. We are participating in outer space activity. We are very proud of the Canadarm attached to satellites, but it still takes 21 hours to get from Halifax to Montreal by train. The progress which we have made has certainly not been reflected in railway activity.

Members of Parliament who are interested in transportation generally ought to take a closer look at the Canadian National Railway and other railways operating in Canada. I hope the amendment proposed by my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Transport, will be the beginning of a re-examination of the very practical aspects of the operation of railways in Canada, particularly the Canadian National Railways.