

Adjournment Debate

ful minister, so I do not know what investigation he carried out.

I gave up on the minister then, Mr. Speaker. He showed he did not want to meet with the railway unions, he did not want to have a meeting with anybody from Newfoundland. He said he wanted to wait for the final report of the Sullivan commission in 1979 before meeting anyone. He said that if Newfoundland wanted to have a railway the money would have to come out of other moneys for transportation in Newfoundland. That is his attitude.

On October 24 I gave up on him and wrote to the Secretary of State for External Affairs to ask him to convene a meeting. After that letter was delivered I got information indicating to me that CN had instructed their Newfoundland division to cut their next year's budget in half, by over half a million dollars. That is going to cost 200 people their jobs in the next construction season. They will not be improving the CN track. They are cutting their maintenance budget by \$500,000, causing more lay-offs in January as well as the laying idle of equipment. As well, they are not to replace some 12 workers, who have left the department, responsible for constructing bridges and buildings. They are not to hire anyone to replace any of them.

I have now called on the minister, in another letter dated October 30, to take some action to convene a meeting with interested Newfoundland MPs—the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) and myself; the Liberal members are showing no interest. I asked him to give instructions to CN that they are to stop this attempt to sabotage the Newfoundland railway by cutting away all its funds. I refer to the savage cuts in Newfoundland by comparison with only \$173,000 in the budgets of all the other three maritime provinces.

What kind of a record of negligence does this constitute against a minister who has not answered these letters which have been sent to him since August 3? They are dated August 3, August 21, September 6; and on October 24 and October 30 I wrote to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The minister deliberately wants to see the Newfoundland railway go by neglect and inattention. It is a case of a battered railway, not a battered wife. It is a case of letting CN go ahead and finish the Newfoundland railway now or in 1979 so that there will be no business going on the railway; and then the story will be that there is no business on the railway, there is no railway to save and the 3,000 jobs have to go. Two thousand to three thousand Newfoundlanders are being sacrificed by this minister's inattention to his duties and lack of response to these requests.

● (2207)

Mr. Hugh A. Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, in March of 1977 a commission of inquiry into transportation in Newfoundland was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Arthur Sullivan. The commission presented the first volume of its report in July of this year. In that volume the commission recommended, among other things, that the rail-

[Mr. Crosbie.]

way should be phased out in ten years; the railway would have an opportunity to demonstrate its continuing role; and re-evaluation of the decision to abandon would take place after a five-year period.

The minister has made it very clear that action in relation to the Newfoundland railway is expected by us to be a bilateral matter, just as the creation of the Sullivan commission, its personnel and terms of reference were agreed upon by both the federal and provincial governments. To this end a federal-provincial committee on the Sullivan commission has been set up to analyse all the recommendations with respect to implementation costs, decision timing and implementation processes. The committee has met twice and will continue to meet approximately on a monthly basis.

In addition, Transport Canada officials are discussing with Canadian National possible courses of positive action designed to make the railway more attractive to shippers, and the minister has had preliminary discussions with Dr. Bandeem about the railway as well.

There has been communication between the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) and the government of Newfoundland and representatives of labour on a number of issues related to the Sullivan report.

While CN has made an alteration in train schedules, I emphasize that no trains have been cancelled. Basically the change referred to by the hon. member opposite involves holding over one train in Bishop's Falls each Saturday for 24 hours and adding it to the train going through Bishop's Falls the following day. This does not result in a change of service to shippers, and the CN has confirmed that the change was instituted solely in response to changes in the level and flow of business. Twelve men will be laid off as a result of this action. A further seven men will be laid off as a national agreement made between CN and the union with respect to a reduction in yard crew personnel comes into effect in Newfoundland. This agreement has already been implemented in many other parts of Canada. Canadian National has decided to postpone the regional implementation of this agreement affecting the seven men until April of 1979.

FISHERIES—RIGHTS OF INDIAN BANDS

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, over the past fortnight I have twice been given the put-down, first on October 19 by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and more recently on October 30 by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Faulkner), for asking very important questions about fisheries management. First the Prime Minister said that I was asking a goofy question. Then the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development said I was asking a silly question.

My questions were quite legitimate, and they deserved straightforward answers. The replies were, in fact, goofy and silly because they were deliberate attempts on the part of the ministers concerned to sidestep the problem about which I was seeking clarification. By making light of my questions the