

Adjournment Debate

Safety and highball operations do not go together, Mr. Speaker, and neither does productivity and service to the public. Crown corporations, like the government, should be model employers, and neither come close. Canadian National Railways, in my opinion, have every intention to phase in two-man yard crews as fast as they can. Edmonton, with 80 regular crews, has five of them reduced to two men. Vancouver, with 57, has already 13 diminished and as many as 25 are marked for the block within a year, and trains are double the length they used to be.

The CNR is deliberately limiting the ability of its crews to produce, thereby reducing its service to the public. If grain is not moving for export fast enough, my advice to the prairie farmer is to direct a large part of this outrage toward the railroads. Since we have been through the worst unemployment record in years, by deliberately reducing crews and service the CN must accept its share of the blame for that also.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, each year the Canadian National financing bill goes before this House and members of this party are usually up screaming. We scream about pensions. We scream about track abandonment and we scream because we do not think the people's money should be used to pay off the third generation descendants of those tycoons who want to ride around in the private cars I talked about earlier. We will never scream when the Canadian National comes before us and tells us it needs money desperately to provide good service to customers, good wages and safe and decent working conditions for the men.

There is no objection by the workers or their union to two-man crews in humpyards or automated yards. What they object to is that these two-man crews are inserted

insidiously in places where neither safety nor productivity is enhanced, and the safety checks done in the daytime are ignored in the dark. I will be talking more about this question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Joseph-Phillipe Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose) pertaining to railroad workers, and I believe it would have been very important if we could have waited to answer this question until the outcome of the meeting that is taking place between Mr. Gale, vice-president of the UTU, and the top officials of the CNR in Edmonton. These officials are trying to find a solution for the resumption of full operation.

I said it would have been a good thing if this report had been available to us. I phoned a short while ago to find out if I could have a report from our officials who are at the meeting, but so far that is impossible. I hope that the conclusions of the meeting will become available to both parties. In the meantime, the information given to me by the departmental officials in regard to the supplementary question, part one, is as follows: Crew reduction is not an arbitrary act by CN but flows from a wage agreement provision negotiated in 1967, which requires a survey of each assignment to ensure that the work can be handled safely. Following such a survey, agreement was reached with the union representatives in June, 1972, for phase implementation between July, 1972 and October, 1973.

If I may answer the hon. member's supplementary question, Mr. Speaker the productivity of two-man yard crews has been demonstrated beyond question at many automated and non-automated yards and with no compromise of safety.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.