

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be in the interests of this House and all hon. members to await the outcome of this inquiry, to establish whether there have been sufficient levels of safety and whether we have had adequate numbers of people engaged in safety surveillance. Simply because we have had an incident does not necessarily mean that the whole system has broken down. There has been an indication by the committee; we are acting on its recommendations and will continue to act pending the recommendations which will flow from the inquiry which will be undertaken very soon.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying that in the absence of the event in Mississauga this past weekend, nothing would have happened in the Department of Transport with regard to these things?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blaikie: My final question, Mr. Speaker, and it is a very serious question, is: Will the minister consider broadening the emphasis of the suggested legislation in this area to include provision in the transport of dangerous goods legislation for the eventual rerouting of dangerous goods around residential areas, where that is possible, so that we do not have to face the kind of risk the people of Mississauga faced this past weekend?

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member says he is going to be serious. I am not sure whether his suggestion is serious. I am sure this is a matter which naturally will be dealt with by the inquiry.

In so far as the government's position with respect to the transportation of dangerous goods is concerned, I indicated earlier that the legislation is in its final drafting stage. It will probably be introduced within the next week or ten days. Because of the complexity of the application of laws with respect to the movement of dangerous goods, this legislation will require the co-operation and concurrence of provinces, municipalities and the industry. We have undertaken to ensure that this bill will not only be supported by but also abided with by all components of the industry.

When the bill comes in, I can assure the hon. member that it will be acceptable to the provinces and to the industry. We hope the hon. member will support the legislation and co-operate so that it can be passed in an expeditious fashion.

● (1425)

MISSISSAUGA DISASTER—INSPECTION OF CARS BEFORE
LEAVING LONDON, ONT.

Mr. Charles Turner (London East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport, but first I would like to tell him, "I told you it was going to happen."

Can the minister inform the members of this House if the car department carmen on the CPR inspected the train and the cars before leaving London, Ontario, and whether the train was given a running inspection by any operator or by the train

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crew at any point between London, Ontario, and the place of derailment; and, if not, why not?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I know that all members of the House respect the hon. member who has just posed that question and I want to address it in as serious a fashion as I can. I think you will understand that because the CTC has called for an inquiry, it would be prejudicial for me to comment on the point that the hon. member has raised. I think he will have to wait until the inquiry concludes its findings and he should let them determine whether, in fact, adequate precautionary measures and safety inspections had been conducted prior to the incident.

Mr. Turner: The crews told me they are not willing to wait for an inquiry; they want more rail inspectors now, before more accidents occur.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: I can only assure the hon. member that—as he knows, I am sure—I have always taken his representations seriously and I will accept that one as a serious representation as well.

MISSISSAUGA DISASTER—ACTION TO AVOID SIMILAR ACCIDENT

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, while the inquiry to which the minister referred is going on, and while he is busy consulting with municipalities, provinces and shippers, the kinds of trains involved in the Mississauga derailment are running through some city or town in Canada every day. I ask him to make a commitment, and more than a commitment, to take action now to make sure that this kind of situation is not going to repeat itself. Why is he not willing to do that?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have made a commitment. I have said that legislation pertaining to the transportation of dangerous goods will be introduced in this House within the next week or ten days. That is a more firm commitment than we got from the previous administration which used this bill simply as "filler" legislation and never brought it forth for debate.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister if he has forgotten, when he was replying, that during the introduction of this bill on second reading and speaking on behalf of the official opposition, he said:

—in our view, we should proceed with the amendments to the National Transportation Act before we proceed with this bill—

Is that a priority? It is just the opposite. I also want to ask him if he recalls that when he said, in speaking on second reading of the bill, that he approves of the objectives of the bill, he said:

—I must say that we insist that these objectives be met without imposing excessive costs or hardships, and with the minimum of restraint put upon the operations of the carriers and the shippers.