

mendations and cannot, on its own, make any decisions of any consequence; that all recommendations or decisions of the pension board must be submitted to the CNR board of directors for ratification before such recommendations or decisions become effective; that the CNR, under the 1959 employees' pension plan, does not match the employees' contributions month by month; that, because of their system of not immediately matching the employees' contribution, they have accumulated an unfunded liability to the employees' pension fund of \$671 million. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that through a quirk—a clever or cunning evasion, a twisting of meaning—in the Pension Benefits Standards Act, the CNR was able to reduce its unfunded liability to \$300 million, which represents a loss of \$371 million to the employees' pension fund?

I wanted to put some of these matters on record, Mr. Speaker, because some of these things have been raised in many meetings in my area. People are concerned about pension plans. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has mentioned difficulties connected with pension plans. These people, under the direction of Mr. Wilf Macdonald and Mr. Jack Pickett, have sought diligently to bring to the attention of the CNR the many problems which have arisen in our area. I believe there has been a neglect on the part of the CNR to pay any attention to those meetings.

• (1730)

I should like to read into the record this afternoon a statement by the Canadian Railway Labour Association with regard to the elimination of some of the services which is presently taking place in Alberta and across Canada. The statement reads:

Many of the basic assumptions upon which the National Transportation Act is founded date back to the MacPherson Royal Commission in the 1950s. We are very strongly of the view that many of the conclusions of the studies done for that Royal commission are not consistent with contemporary views. The act contains a built-in bias toward using economic viability as the over-riding criterion for determining railway passenger transportation needs. We suggest that the assumptions upon which the act was based are not a sufficient basis for contemporary policy and that these assumptions are in contradiction with many of the government's other policies.

The assumptions of the act are insufficient today because the Canadian people and their government have increasingly realized that while economic criteria are important, perhaps the most important criteria, they should not be the over-riding consideration in all cases. This is especially true when one considers the long-term results of any given action. We have realized that while the gross national product may be a reasonably satisfactory aggregate measure of the Canadian people's wellbeing, it is a poor measure of the quality of life.

Increasingly also, economics and the other social sciences have placed renewed emphasis upon a vastly broadened concept of cost, realizing that public costs and benefits can, and frequently do, outweigh private costs and benefits. To consider only costs and benefits in a narrow sense is to accept a short-term and unrealistic framework for policy. It is not sufficient for the Canadian Transport Commission to look at the costs and revenues as submitted by the railways for such a service and merely weigh those arguments against the views of the public at a hearing.

This government has increasingly demonstrated its willingness to view problems on a long-term basis and to do so within the framework of a broadened concept of costs and benefits, especially with respect to environmental questions. But its willingness to be farsighted on some environmental issues contrasts sharply with

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the underlying assumptions of the National Transportation Act, which is the basic element in Canada's transportation policy.

There are numerous ways in which the National Transportation Act conflicts with current policy. We wish to mention only two. With the elimination of rail passenger service the public's ability to choose among different modes of transportation is being restricted. This would not be such a serious situation if the various methods of transportation were perfect substitutes. They are not. They are in many ways complementary but not substitutive. Therefore the mobility of the public is being lessened and the cost of maintaining the same amount of mobility is being increased.

Secondly, the elimination of rail passenger service is promoting the increased use of automobiles at the same time as the public and various levels of government are becoming concerned about the increasing costs of pollution, congestion, etc. The current policy is encouraging the elimination of rail passenger service despite the knowledge that such service is the most acceptable means of moving large numbers of people on an urban, interurban and national basis. We submit that the aims of the present policy of the National Transportation Act are outdated, inadequate, and inappropriate and should therefore be immediately revised.

We continue to be greatly distressed by the prevailing inequity as regards the assistance provided to one mode of transportation as opposed to another. This situation can only serve to exacerbate the problems discussed above and at great length in our previous submissions. We note that our view that the inequity of the assistance works to the disadvantage of the railway passenger systems has been supported by others, including the Canadian Transport Commission in its order of January 29, 1971, concerning the discontinuance of the 'Canadian'.

Such an inequitable policy is tragic. It leads to policies based on the short-run rather than the long-run and is, in our view, in conflict with Part I of the National Transportation Act.

Anyway, there it is. These are my feelings, too. There is another letter here which I should like to read into the record. These are from my colleagues and many of my friends who are railway men in my constituency. I have a lot of respect for them because I used to be on an extra gang banging away with a 12-pound hammer. They were tough days. This letter comes from John L. Pickett, President of the Edmonton Council of Railroad Unions:

Dear Sir:

During the last few months, much has been said and written about moving grain to the west coast for export by rail. But how about the rank and file railroad men, the people who actually do the work and keep our railroads running? Railroaders in western Canada during a winter such as we are experiencing is not easy. Temperatures dropping to as low as 40 below. Traincrews switching, spotting and picking up cars, mostly at night; trainmen and conductors often tramping through four feet of snow, putting in 12 or 14 hour shifts to get over the road, often on a thermos of coffee and a few cold sandwiches; the men in the yards, the switchcrews, making up trains, blocking grain, the carmen, checking and fixing bad order cars, walking freight trains, fixing air leaks so that we get the proper brake tests. The signal maintainers who get called out in the middle of the night, to go and fix some break in the signal system. The sectionmen, who are out there in all weathers, doing the 101 things they have to do, to keep the railroad running and, of course, the countless other railroad workers who contribute their share. No, railroading in the winter months in western Canada is no picnic.

We know we need more locomotives, cabooses, cars, radios, better storage facilities at the west coast, bigger storage yards so that when the weather is good we can move cars faster and cheaper. Why can we not have 4,000 or 5,000 cars of grain stored at the west coast in early December so that if we have snow slides or derailments in the winter, the grain is there where we need it?

Give us the tools and the facilities and the Canadian railroad men will move all the bulk commodities we need for export to make this great country of ours thrive.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!