

*National Transportation Act, 1986***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ACT, 1986

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-18, an Act respecting national transportation, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Transport, and Motion No. 5 (Mr. Robichaud, p. 6715).

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate today. It is unfortunate that Members can only speak for 10 minutes on such an important issue and well designed motion as the one presented by my friend and colleague, the distinguished Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud). The Hon. Member's motion indicates that it is indeed our duty to make sure that Bill C-18 contains specific provisions that ensure regional development and give it priority over other concerns.

If it is necessary to convince the House of the importance of those requirements, let me describe a situation that exists in eastern Ontario, particularly in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. CN has taken the position that it will shut down a portion of its tracks. It has decided to shut down some 2,500 miles of rail line by embarking, as it already has, on a deliberate action of discouraging customers and rerouting some of their traffic on what it calls the intermodal system, which is a truck to most of us. Once it has rerouted that traffic and lost some of its customers, it will go to the CTC and ask to abandon certain rail lines with the argument that it no longer has enough customers.

On September 25, 1986, CN sent a memo, signed by Mr. R.P. Langlois, Regional Manager of Marketing for the St. Lawrence region in Montreal. The memo was sent to a number of people and states that in the context of rationalization of the rail infrastructure, some lines have been identified as being candidates for abandonment in the coming years. A preliminary plan has been prepared and attached are the sections affected. It states that every effort to attract new traffic on these sections is to be abandoned immediately and, for the traffic already on these lines, they must consider either, and preferably, converting this traffic onto the intermodal system or adjusting rates to minimize present losses.

I have copies of the internal correspondence of CN which are documents designed to chase away, divest customers that CN has at the present time because it is allegedly losing money on those lines.

The lines affected are the Beachburg subdivision, 163.9 miles, and the Alexandria subdivision, which is the line of rail just east of Ottawa and just west of Montreal, 57.7 miles.

CN wants to close down those two rail lines, according to the internal correspondence I have received. Since there is no longer any Canadian Pacific line between Montreal and Ottawa, and there will no longer be a CN rail line, there will

be no train service between the two cities, either freight or passenger.

I objected most strenuously to this course of action. Officials from CN come to the community I represent and make long-winded speeches, telling us not to worry. However, when we ask if it means the line will not be shut down, the official states that it means we are not supposed to worry. When we ask if it means the line will be shut down, we are told it means that we should not worry.

CN has not been exactly forthcoming with answers on this issue. I received a letter from Mr. Ron Lawless on December 4, 1986, in which he described the situation concerning the Alexandria subdivision. He states in his letter: "As we proceed with our studies, one of the lines which will undoubtedly be reviewed is the Alexandria subdivision". The House will note that he says "will be reviewed". He went on to state: "The line accommodates at present freight service as well as VIA passenger service. At this time, I can advise you and indeed assure you that should a study reveal the need for a change in status I will see to it that you are made aware of the situation".

I just read other internal correspondence in which the decision had already been taken and CN was in the process of divesting itself of customers in an attempt to shut down the rail line in the future.

Needless to say, Mr. Lawless's letter is inconsistent with the truth, shall we say, and I phoned Mr. Lawless to express my displeasure with someone who is paid by the taxpayers of Canada and who gives Members of Parliament information which is inconsistent with the facts.

I have another letter from the President and Chief Operating Officer of CN. It is dated September 9, 1986, before Mr. Lawless sent a letter to me. The letter states: "This will confirm discussions on Thursday, September 4, 1986, concerning the Alderdale and Beachburg subdivisions". It goes on to describe how CN will shut down these rail lines.

It states on the second page of the letter: "Abandonment of the two subdivisions would result in annual track maintenance saving of \$10 million and forgo during the next five years \$50 million in capital expenditure. It also would create the likelihood of CN discontinuing the use of the Alexandria subdivision which currently has a five-year estimated capital requirement of \$27 million".

The letter states that this would create the likelihood of discontinuing the Alexandria subdivision. The letter was signed by Mr. M.A. Blackwell, Assistant Vice-President. Mr. Blackwell is in fact the assistant to Mr. Lawless, the guy who wrote to me telling me I had nothing to worry about and that no plan to shut down these rail lines had been undertaken and that he would advise me if they ever did undertake to shut down rail lines.