

Oral Questions

"The change in the Crow rate . . . will create employment", giving the impression that it would create thousands of jobs.

The railway union which acts for workers of the CPR have been told, and I understand they have been in communication with the Minister, that in the next few years the CPR proposes to reduce its work force by something in the neighbourhood of 4,000 workers. This will have a very serious effect on workers in Moncton, Montreal, Winnipeg, and Calgary. Has the Minister discussed this fact with officials of CPR? If so, can he explain how his promise that there would be increased employment will likely lead to a very sharp reduction in the number of people working for the CPR?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the predictions that we made concerning the economic impact of the Western Grain Transportation Bill are bearing out. This year alone over \$1 billion worth of new capital will be invested in this country, with a substantially large and major impact and the development of jobs in a wide variety of occupations. I draw to the Hon. Member's attention the tendering a few weeks back of major contracts for the Rogers Pass tunnel, which will be a \$600 million project and have very major economic impact on the construction trades and others. When we talked about employment we were covering a broad base of employment in a wide variety of occupations.

On the particular matter of the proposed changes in the structuring of some of the workforces in the railroad, it is my understanding that those are caused primarily by new changes in technology in the attempts to gain productivity improvements. Certain practices become obsolescent and, therefore, savings can be occasioned. That is not something that has in any way been decided. It is my understanding that this is a matter that the railroads want to introduce as part of their labour negotiations, to work out agreements over a period of time with the unions. That is what collective bargaining is about, to sit down and look at a problem that jointly affects the operation of a corporation, in this case, and to have management and labour work out what would be a mutually satisfactory way of doing that. That is the kind of practice this Government deals in, to allow those problems to be properly addressed through the collective bargaining process.

Mr. Orlikow: When the Minister was making those rousing speeches about what the Crow rate changes would do, he certainly did not imply to the railway workers that part of the package would be a very substantial reduction in the number of people employed. I would point out that building the Rogers Pass tunnel will only create very temporary jobs.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER CONVENE MEETING OF INTERESTED PARTIES

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the President of the CPR Machinists' Union sent a telegram to the Minister asking him to convene a meeting between the officials of CPR, the railway unions, the Minister, and his Department, to discuss this threatened major lay-off. Has the Minister responded yet? Is he making arrangements for that kind of a

meeting, or is it something which he will leave to the tender mercies of his friends in the CPR?

● (1440)

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that the Hon. Member is trying to shade the point. I have met on a couple of occasions with members of the railway unions to discuss the matter. I had intended to meet with them yesterday in Winnipeg but my presence was required back here for a vote that members of the NDP intended to have held but never got around to holding. As a result, I was not able to fulfil that responsibility and meet with the unions.

Mr. Deans: What are you talking about? That's not true.

Mr. Axworthy: However, we will be meeting with them at the first opportunity, and will also be meeting with the railway management to discuss the matter.

The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain seems to be growling in his chair in an irrelevant manner.

Mr. Deans: Damned right I am!

Mr. Axworthy: If he would permit me, I would like to answer his colleague's question. If he would have the courtesy to allow me to answer his colleague, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Deans: Why would I have courtesy for you? You're not telling the truth.

Mr. Axworthy: The fact of the matter is that we are concerned about these matters. We will meet with the unions and the management to make sure that the employment is there.

Mr. Deans: Sit down!

Mr. Axworthy: I would hope that members of the NDP would not have such an obsolete point of view that they would be prepared to say that no company at any time should be allowed to look at how it can improve the productivity of its workforce and therefore be able to provide a more competitive and lower cost service to the shippers of the country so that we may compete economically around the world.

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

REQUEST THAT PRISONER IN KANSAS BE TRANSFERRED TO CANADIAN PENITENTIARY

Hon. Bud Cullen (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. Under what, I am sure, was a well intentioned but seemingly misguided policy of the Manitoba Government, young Indian children were sent to the United States for adoption. One Cameron Kerley was allowed to be adopted by a single male who, as it later turned out, was a homosexual. After repeated attempts to escape, and