

Relocation of Railway Lines

I now wish to quote from a letter written by Damas and Smith on the subject of the Winnipeg rail study. It reads in part:

During the course of public meetings it became apparent that the strongest opposition to the railway relocation came from those people who own homes in or near the reception areas, i.e., the corridor into which the relocated railways would be placed (for example, the residents of Foxgrove Avenue in East St. Paul, and St. Michael's Road in St. Vital) and who believe that this relocation would lower the value of their property. Some sympathy for these people who feel themselves directly threatened was also found amongst those whose homes are remote from the reception areas and who would be less directly affected but nevertheless allied themselves with the opponents because they believe the proposed relocation to be unnecessary and unjust.

It continues:

The proposal to remove the yards but retain the main lines in their present locations is in effect what has been referred to in the Railway Relocation Study report as 'the Do-Nothing alternative'. Strictly speaking the Do-Nothing alternative of the report was thought of as just that—the alternative of doing absolutely nothing with the railways; but it soon became obvious that even if the public were to do absolutely nothing about railway relocation, the Railway Companies themselves would take action; and it seemed equally clear that the Railway Companies would act with respect to their yards but not to their main lines.

This suggestion may conflict with the provisions in the bill. Even if the municipalities may not wish to do anything, the railways might do something on their own. I continue:

Although a clear and reliable appreciation of the results of a Do-Nothing approach to the railway problem can only be provided by a detailed study, it is nevertheless possible to speculate about such a prospect, and to arrive at certain conclusions, however tentative and unsubstantiated they may be.

● (1640)

I mentioned the St. James corridor. One of our fears is that some of the CPR yards or their freight facilities might be moved adjacent to a residential area, namely Crestview Heritage Park and other areas off Sturgeon Road in west Winnipeg. I have a description of the properties the CPR has been acquiring. This is agricultural land. They have acquired some 172 acres adjacent to this residential property. The last thing we want in that area is a classification yard or warehouse facilities for CPR. This is one of our main concerns in west Winnipeg. I quote:

For example, it is generally known that the CP Rail has acquired land in the Rosser Area for the relocation of their classification yard. I can be assumed that the plans for this yard are designed to meet the requirements of the CP and that the creation of a rational pattern of land use for this sector of the City is a secondary consideration, if indeed it is a consideration at all. Moreover, even if the classification function is moved from the present CP Rail yard to the new location in Rosser, the present yard will still be required for industrial support and car storage, and will therefore remain in its present location. The result of this Do-Nothing approach (on the part of the public) therefore would be to create a new classification yard in Rosser with possible adverse effects on the surrounding area, as well as the retention of the existing yard in its present location. There would appear to be no real advantage at all to the public in such a situation.

I quote from an editorial in the *Winnipeg Tribune* dated October 29, 1973:

As the city's environment committee chairman, Abe Yanofsky, said, Winnipeg's previously anticipated cost of \$20 million for rail relocation is now \$50 million. That means Ottawa would be expected to pay another \$50 million or more. Add that to the cost of helping other cities relocate their railways and the price becomes astronomical.

[Mr. McKenzie.]

It would be different if this was the only project the federal government has to worry about financing. But it isn't. As an Information Canada report said last year, federal and provincial government departments are now in the position where they don't even try to tell people how government programs can help them. As one official said: "If the general population was aware of the services offered, the government would go bankrupt."

It would, of course, be nice to see the railways removed from the downtown core and the city embarked on a massive reconstruction program, with parks and byways and a generally planned environment. But can taxpayers generally afford it? Perhaps the time has come to be realistic. As Coun. William Norrie said: "Rail relocation will probably not happen in your lifetime and mine."

If city hall really wants to save the taxpayers money, they could stop talking of relocating railways at a cost of \$100 million and get on with the \$13.2 million Sherbrook-McGregor Street Overpass before the price goes up. That way, the saving would be terrific.

There was considerable concern over rail line relocation at the last tri-level meeting in Edmonton. I quote from a news report in the Edmonton media:

A federal government program aimed at aiding provincial and municipal governments with the cost of rail relocation Monday got a critical reception by Manitoba Urban Affairs Minister Saul Miller and Winnipeg Councillor Robert Steen.

Federal Urban Affairs Minister Ron Basford announced here Monday during the second national tri-level conference that the federal government will pay up to 50 per cent of the net costs to the railroads of approved rail relocation schemes.

Mr. Miller said his initial reaction to the program was "extreme disappointment." Coun. Steen said the announcement makes rail relocation impossible.

"The idea of them only picking up 50 per cent of the net cost to the railway would put up the price of land (vacated by the rail lines) to such an extent that the costs to Winnipeg and the province would be exceedingly high," Mr. Miller said.

"Whether this land could then be used in a beneficial way is highly doubtful in my mind."

Mr. Miller said the Manitoba government supports the principle of rail relocation in Winnipeg "if it makes economic and social sense."

"But if it means that we are paying \$100 million or perhaps \$50 million to simply move something and then find that the costs of the land vacated is so expensive that we can't really use it in a proper way, then frankly I am not that convinced that it is a good thing."

(The principle of rail relocation was first proposed by the now-extinct Metro government to get railway facilities out of the centre of the city and to free the land they now occupy for other development.)

Mr. Miller said the federal program is a backward step because in the original Winnipeg rail relocation study the federal government had shared 75 per cent of the cost with Manitoba and Winnipeg picking up 7½ per cent each and the two major railroads five per cent each.

"What you have here is a regressive step, and not at all a forward step"—

Coun. Steen... said Mr. Basford's announcement was "the most disappointing thing I have heard at this conference."

He said the city had been hoping the federal government would pick up at least 75 to 80 per cent of the total cost of rail relocation in Winnipeg.

"As far as I am concerned, this (announcement) finishes the hopes of rail relocation," Coun. Steen said immediately after hearing the federal minister's proposal.

Whether their fears are justified is hard to say at this time. The standing committee will certainly have its hands full with this bill. The Damas and Smith report on the Winnipeg railway study gives the advantages and disadvantages. Whether the figures contained in it are realistic today, I do not know.

Those are just a few of the concerns of the people of Winnipeg, the members of my party and myself with