

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Maurice Foster (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, in response to the matter raised in the House by the Member from Kootenay East-Revelstoke (Mr. Parker) during the Question Period on February 24, 1984, to the effect that CP Rail in Cranbrook, British Columbia, had invoked a material change in working conditions to reduce the wages of employees, I am pleased to inform the House that Treasury Board Secretariat officials have been in touch with CP Rail officials on this matter.

The member rightly pointed out that CP Rail is under the restraint program and as such the compensation plan of the employees cannot be modified other than by a wage increase of 6 per cent in the first year and 5 per cent in the second year.

I am informed that operating considerations have necessitated a change in the manner in which trains transporting coal within the Province of British Columbia operate. As a result, approximately 30 persons have been declared surplus and are entitled to exercise seniority and other rights under the terms of their collective agreements.

There are two employee groups affected by the changes, the trainmen and the locomotive engineers. The changes in Sparwood are affecting employees living in Cranbrook, but it should be noted that these changes are being handled in accordance with the provisions of the collective agreements in question.

Pursuant to the provisions of the groups' collective agreements—Article 47 of the United Transportation Union covering trainment working in the Prairie and Pacific regions and Article 30 of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, which are entitled "Material Changes in Working Conditions", the employer is required to give advance notice of the operational change he wishes to introduce in accordance with its provisions. The article stipulates that the company may not initiate any material change in working conditions without giving as

much advance notice as possible to the general chairman concerned, along with a full description thereof and with appropriate details as to the contemplated affects upon employees concerned.

Furthermore, I am advised that no material change can be made by CP Rail until such time as an agreement is reached between the company and the bargaining agents involved or a decision has been rendered by an arbitration board.

In order to minimize the effects of the material change on the employees in question, the parties have held six meetings since October of last year and have agreed upon all but four items with respect to changes in employees' working conditions. I would like to add that the parties have agreed to refer the four outstanding items to binding arbitration. An arbitration board heard these four matters on Friday last, March 9, and a decision is expected shortly. None of the four matters in question deal with rates of pay.

Based on the information provided to Treasury Board Secretariat staff by CP Rail officials, the reported change in operations has been dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the collective agreements in question, and CP Rail's operational change does not appear to contravene the Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act.

Since the member has also written to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) concerning this matter, a reply in greater detail will be forwarded to the member shortly when additional information is provided to the President of the Treasury Board.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

At 6.26 p.m., the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.