

the Great Lakes, the Rockies or the Atlantic, they were caused by broken or burnt axles.

Now it is evident that from Vancouver to Halifax, axles require the same care; they must be lubricated. No private railway would allow its cars to run with non-lubricated axles. If it is not done today it is because the mechanics responsible for the maintenance of trains have been transferred; they are fewer. If you have the opportunity to talk with one of them, he will tell you: I did all I could but the train left before I had time to check half the axles. That is why the axles burn, the trains derail, which involved losses amounting to \$13 million in 1970-71.

Here is another serious cause of derailment which is often referred to in the report I already mentioned: rail breakage. Rail breakages occur in the Atlantic area, in the Rockies and in the St. Lawrence area. Finally, the cause is always the same: the reduction in the number of linesmen and railwaymen. The number is almost always the same by shifts, but the distance that each shift must look after has tripled; therefore, they are unable to do their job adequately. These men work at the end of their rail section when they know there might be something urgent they should do at the other end. They are often unable to get there because some urgent matters have to be attended to at a given place. When there are 40 to 50 miles of track to maintain, obviously, if they take two days looking after 15 miles, there will remain 30 which will not be maintained and then accidents may happen.

Some regional superintendents have obtained their position through influence and unfortunately, these fellows are two often unaware of the work required for the maintenance of railway tracks. For several of those who have reached the top without any effort, rails, railways, all that just happened. So, to them, something that just happens to be does not require any maintenance.

For reasons of economy, I repeat, they have laid off railwaymen, brigades have been reduced as the French would put it, which has led to the difficulties that we are experiencing now, namely too many accidents, and passengers who still have the courage to use this mode of transportation are risking their lives.

Besides, a great many more inspectors were appointed. Even station masters are supervised. An inspector used to look into the cash box which was under the station master's care. As its contents range from \$100 to \$300 this was not so serious and it was checked once a year. Even if these station masters have sometimes paid \$10,000 to \$15,000 in to the retirement fund, we have reached the point where these men are mistrusted and an inspector visits the stations about once a month so as to check their contents. Mr. Speaker, I repeat that the number of inspectors has increased so much that we are now under the impression that the Canadian National Railways have now become a second Canadian Senate, with the difference that many of these inspectors do not know each other. Then, you will say: They may not know each other because the country is so big. But it is not because of the size of the country; their number is now so great that if they knew one another, they would be ashamed to go out and do the work that is requested of them. Even in the city of Montreal, they are now spying on each other, apparently without knowing anybody.

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

● (1620)

Mr. Speaker, last spring, I gave to all the members of this House a letter sent to me by a group of railroad workers. This group did not want to sign the letter. I learned the author's name three weeks later because Canadian National employees are scared, it seems. I would like to quote from this letter which I finally gave to all other members after having it translated for the benefit of English-speaking members. This letter said, and I quote:

Our Members of Parliament have taken an oath to serve the interests of Canada, therefore of the people in general.

The Canadian National, a Crown corporation, seems more than sick in its administration having become the property of a small group of about 2,500 officers who eat up and suck the receipts—company cars, paid expenses—so in order to try and cope with that plague of small bosses an attempt was made to cut down on indispensable people at lower echelons, namely linesmen, car inspectors, station masters, with the result that we know: accidents over accidents. And who pays the bill? Naturally, the bill comes back before Parliament. Even Canadian National officers can boast that our Members of Parliament are in Ottawa only for a while and that they are there to stay.

Furthermore, that group points out that their unions show signs of advanced decay. Why are they trying to protect companies to the detriment of employees? Then they come up with this answer: We have seen the acceptance of new pension plans that presently benefit only those who have 45 to 50 years of service and others to come in 25 or 30 years. What about those who have retired and are being prematurely pushed into the grave through all sorts of devious means? Furthermore, a train accident brings around seven or eight white hats and three or four workers who have their fill with that disgusting administration.

Union leaders are at the mercy of railway companies to ensure survival because those companies suck the pay cheques of the employees to pay the big union leaders. That is why they became weak before the railways and an important group of experienced workers suffer so much.

Why did the vice-president of the Canadian National want so much to discuss pension funds alone and behind closed doors with the unions?

A royal commission should be set up to investigate the relations between those gentlemen. Why is it necessary to die before you have a retirement to live?

Why did a station master retire a few years ago with an annual pension of \$1,200 after 47 years of service, while the former president, Mr. Donald Gordon, retired with a pension of \$20,000 a year after 15 years of service. Why?

Only the passing of an act could do justice to the needy railroad employees whose services are no longer required, unless they are forced to start all over again. What happened to our oath?

They call on hon. members and try to gain their support.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, many CNR employees sent us their comments about their superannuation fund. Compared with the possible retirement of Quebec Provincial Police employees, for instance, where a person is eligible for superannuation after 25 years of service, CNR employees are seeking voluntary retirement after 30 years of service. Canadian Armed Forces personnel are eligible for pension after 20 years of service.