

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 1983

22/06/1983 *Buckingham Post*

Buckingham

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Worried about unstable soil conditions and additional noise and traffic in the downtown, R.B. Walker - a former plant manager of ERCO in Buckingham (Quebec) - has spoken out strongly against plans to link the plant with CP's Buckingham Spur by constructing a bridge over the Lievre River. Instead, Walker advocates a new line into the plant from nearby Angers on the Lachute Subdivision. Doing this would eliminate the need for a bridge since the plant is on the same side of the river as Angers and would do away with the current steep grade on the Spur up from Masson". At present, the grade limits uphill loads to between 3 and 4 cars per train, while loaded cars moved downhill must be moved in conjunction with quite a few empties in order to provide enough braking to prevent runaways. According to Walker, even Canadian Pacific once examined the feasibility of relocating the spur. However, the plan was subsequently dropped. (Branchline).

10/08/1983 *Eganville Leader*

Renfrew

The Canadian National Railway line between Renfrew Junction and Whitney will be abandoned in fewer than 90 days.

In an order dated August 2, the Railway Transport Committee agreed with CN's contention that the 90.26 mile line was not feasible financially to keep in operation any longer.

The order, which was signed by committee acting secretary M. L'Ecuyer, concluded the "branch line is uneconomic and is likely to continue to be uneconomic and the operation thereof should be abandoned."

It gave Canadian National three months from the date of the order to shut down the line and advise the committee that the route has been officially abandoned, and the removal of tracks and other facilities has been completed.

The Railway Transport Committee's conclusions thus ends a saga which has been going on for several years, but heated up when CN elected to stop winter service on the line back in January, 1982. Service was discontinued between Barry's Bay and Whitney in 1974.

No Effect

A public hearing was held in Barry's Bay last December before one member of the three-person committee to debate CN's application to abandon the complete line.

It was from submissions heard during this day-long hearing that Commissioner Anne-Marie Trahan compiled her final report which was completed on July 20.

At the Bay hearings, CN outlined its financial situation regarding the line, while those in favour of keeping it in operation (including Grattan township) argued that once the economy picks up, the service will once again become attractive to those companies along the line and possibly attract new firms. Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MP Len Hopkins and Renfrew south MPP Paul Yakabuski asked that the application be suspended for five years to see if the rail line could be viable once again.

The committee determined that CN's actual losses ranged from \$492,615 in 1978 to \$551,500 in 1980. In 1981 it was \$515,217, and carloads on the line decreased from 61 in 1977 to 28 in 1982 due mainly to increased freight charges for wood chips and other mill materials. Mills subsequently found it cheaper to ship by truck.

Pertaining to the future of the area, if the line was shut down, Mme. Trahan outlined several points.

She wrote that forestry, agriculture and tourism are the major economic activities in this part of the Valley, but none of the firms related to these have used rail service to a great extent in the past decade and she reached the conclusion "there was no substantive evidence presented to suggest that, in the foreseeable future, there would be significant developments in these activities which would require rail services."

As for the shift from trucking to rail transportation, the commissioner did not deny there was a potential for such a shift as outlined by Robert McRae of McRae Mills in December. However, she added that such a shift would depend on whether rail would become financially feasible in the future, and there was no indication of that at the present time or in the future.

"For these reasons," read the report, "I consider it unlikely that such events will occur in the foreseeable future even if the line were retained for a five year period..."

Furthermore, the committee saw "no evidence to indicate that any industry requiring rail service is contemplating locating in the area, or that mineral resources are likely to be exploited in the near future."