

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 1984

01/02/1984 Vialogue

Kingston (CN)

Kingston

Turtle duty. It seems that everyone working at the Kingston, Ontario station has been assigned to turtle duty. Turtle duty is the act of picking up the large reptile (usually by the tail) to remove it from its desired place of rest by the track, roadbed or platform. The turtles wander up from two swamps on either side of the station. Although turtle duty will never be written into their job descriptions, the Kingston VIA employees enjoy putting a good turtle back on (its own) track: VIALOGUE. November 1984.

With picture.

Sabotage suspected in train derailment.

Police are looking at sabotage as a possible cause of a train derailment in Nepean Thursday night that sent 27 passengers to hospital with minor injuries. The LRC "super train" on the evening run from Toronto to Ottawa was sidetracked on to a dead-end spur line in a Nepean lumber yard as it slowed on its approach to Ottawa.

Investigators are trying to determine how a padlocked railway switch was opened Thursday evening, diverting the VIA Rail train on to the side track.

Police said today that someone with access to a CN railway switching key apparently opened the switch on the spur line leading into the Kott Lumber yard sometime Thursday evening. There was no signs that the padlock had been forced.

The train's engineer spotted the open switch and immediately put on his brakes but the four-car train went on to the spur line and ploughed into three flat-bed cars.

Police said if the flat bed cars, including one loaded with lumber, had not been there the LRC (Light, Rapid, Comfortable) locomotive and some of the four passenger cars would have landed in the Jock River.

The last train passing over the closed switch went through safely at 4.50 p.m. The accident occurred at 10.45 p.m.

CN official Bruno Leroux said it's possible that someone without CN authorization may have gotten the keys. Only CN trainmen and section foremen have access to the keys.

Leroux said cleanup operations will take the rest of day.

The front of the locomotive was embedded in the flat cars. None of the passenger cars turned over but some were partially off tracks.

Canadian Transport Commission investigators and police are trying to find out how the padlocked switch was opened, putting the LRC train on to the siding.

There were about 85 passengers on the train. Twenty-seven were taken to three hospitals for treatment of cuts and bruises and were released.

A modified version of the region's year-old hospital disaster plan was put into action for the first time.

A first-of-its-kind instrument installed last October that connects all the region's hospitals on a special radio frequency was switched on at the regional ambulance dispatch centre.

"It really helped us tremendously," said Gerry Savoie, assistant executive-director at Queensway-Carleton Hospital and head of the hospitals' disaster plan for the last three years.

"We had at least 20 minutes' notice before any patients arrived."

Seventeen injured passengers were treated at Queensway-Carleton. Savoie said because the hospital had warning and the accident happened just as shifts changed, extra staff were kept on, allowing the hospital to accommodate the extra patients smoothly.

The new radio system also allowed all the other hospitals in the region to keep up-to-date with how the situation was being handled and to communicate with Queensway-Carleton.

Savoie said he was very pleased with how the plan worked and said it shows regional hospitals are prepared to handle a larger disaster.

Only one person, thought to be a woman in her 50s, had to be taken off the train on a stretcher. She apparently suffered back injuries.

About 60 uninjured passengers were taken to the CN station by four OC Transpo buses.

Spokesmen for the CTC, CN and Via Rail said that neither reconstruction work on the rail line nor the locomotive that ran the five-unit train were factors in the derailment.

CNR officials on the scene refused to answer reporters' questions.

"When we're allowed to release any information, we'll give it to you and nothing more," said one of the officials, who refused to identify himself.

The official threatened to have Nepean police throw reporters off the Kott Lumber Company property.

But one of the passengers, Ed Kulbida of Saskatoon, a trainman, said he had heard that a switch to a sidetrack was locked open, directing the train onto the spur line.

Kulbida estimated the speed of the train at about 70 km/h.

Nepean firemen were on the scene, but Fire Chief Keith Davidson said there was no danger of fire.

The engine, which came to a halt about 10 metres from a building on the Kott lot, was dented at the front when it struck a lone boxcar filled with lumber.

The lumber was strewn about the yard.

Passenger Kay Wisen of Halifax, who suffered cuts to her legs, said there was no warning.

"I just went on the floor. There was a grinding noise and that was all."

Afterward, she noticed many passengers lying on the floor nursing minor cuts and bruises.

"There was no advance warning," said John Tilton, of Mississauga.

"All I know is that I was thrown across the aisle and I ended up on the floor with a cut eye and a cut chin."

Jennifer Barrett, 24, was travelling to Ottawa for a job interview. She was sleeping when the accident occurred.

"All of a sudden I felt the train shaking, and then it was over and my car was on a slant," she said.

"I was a little nervous at first, but then everything seemed to be under control."

Steward Ahmed Mokrane was standing in the aisle collecting dishes and cleaning up in preparation for the train's arrival in Ottawa.

"I jumped in between two seats when the train started to shake and then there was a loud boom and the lights went out," he said.

Second Story.

Train wreck could have been avoided

A saboteur and a \$1,000 switch protected by a \$20 padlock are at the root of Thursday night's \$2-million train wreck in Nepean.

Someone unlocked the switch, without damaging the lock, then locked it again after shifting it to steer the train onto a dead-end siding.

The switch has a signal a round piece of reflecting red metal that turns to face oncoming trains when the switch is moved but it wasn't visible until the train was too close for the engineer to stop it before entering the siding. A Canadian Transport Commission investigator said Friday an electronic warning system used on more heavily-travelled tracks would have given the engineer ample warning.

But the track on which the VIA train from Toronto to Ottawa derailed, sending 27 people to hospital with minor injuries, is not used enough to warrant the multi-million dollar investment in such signals, said investigator Alex Kocsis.

The Toronto-Ottawa line only has the electronic system between Nepean's eastern edge and Ottawa station that stretch is part of CN's centralized traffic control, which uses a computer and dispatcher to direct switching from the station.

CN dispatcher Mike Mongeon, said with the computerized system, any change to a switch would show up in the central dispatch and he could radio a warning to the train.

Light signals on the track would also automatically flash red, warning the train engineer, Mongeon said.

The last train passing over the switch involved in the accident went through safely at 4:50 p.m. The accident occurred at 10:45.

Switching onto industrial spurs on the Ottawa-Toronto line west of Ottawa is done manually by a crew member. The manual switches simply push a piece of rail one way or another to steer the wheels of trains passing through.

Kocsis said the train driver saw the red reflector attached to the switch, indicating the track was directed onto the industrial spur, but by then it was too late to stop.

Red means the switch is not tied to the main line. But a train is not like a car. With the steel wheels going on the steel track at 80 km/h it takes at least a quarter of a mile to stop. And he just didn't have a quarter of a mile."

There are only six passenger trains a day on the track where the accident occurred and it wasn't economically feasible for the railroads to install the system. There are 52 trains daily using the Montreal-Toronto line, he said.

It comes down to economics. It costs money to install and money to maintain an electronic switching system, Kocsis said. Canadian National spokesman Rene Chappaz said Friday the padlock was placed back on the switch in a way contrary to CN operating procedures. "It does not appear that the switch was opened through an error by a CN employee."

CN official Bruno Leroux said it's possible that someone without CN authorization has the keys. Only CN trainmen and section foremen are supposed to have them.

Nepean police Insp. Wayne Phillips said Friday: "It is obvious that somebody tampered with a switching device that diverted the train onto a spur line. We have some leads and we are following them."

Phillips said someone got at the switch controls either by having the key necessary to open a padlock or by opening it through some other means.

Travelling about 80 km/h, the normal speed for trains passing through the switch, the train tore up more than 60 metres of track. The new Light, Rapid, Comfortable locomotive and four passenger cars plowed into three flatbed freight cars in the Kott Lumber Company yard on Moodie Drive. The freight cars stopped the train before it landed in the Jock River.

The force of the impact crumpled the front end of the \$2 million locomotive and heavily damaged the wheels and underbody of it and some of the cars.

The passenger cars were extensively damaged inside, too. The CTC and police investigation is expected to take more than a month.

The switch at the Kott spur line had last been opened Wednesday morning, when the freight cars were delivered, officials said. It must have been closed again, though, because numerous trains passed through since.

The CN line was expected to be reopened this morning. CN trains used CPR lines Friday. There were about 85 passengers on the train.

15/08/1984 Ottawa Citizen Winchester Chesterville

CHESTERVILLE Local rail traffic is being re-routed through Ottawa today while CPR workers clear away wreckage following a spectacular 25-car derailment in Chester -ville early yesterday morning.

Train No. 482, on a Vancouver to Montreal run, uncoupled 30 cars from the caboose at 2:20am as it entered the west end of the village. The 60-ton cars slammed into each other, sending up a shower of sparks 50 feet high.

The five-man crew on the freight train, which was carrying lumber and flour, were uninjured.

Stan Harris, superintendent for CP's Smiths Falls rail division, said yesterday that the derailment, just across from the arena, is under investigation and that the cause of the accident and the amount of damage have not been determined.

While onlookers gathered around the wreckage, which in one section looked like a broken accordion as six cars leaned up and over each other, a 20-man maintenance crew was joined by 40 workers from CPU's specialized wrecking crew to pull the cars from the tracks.

As the wreckage was lifted away, trucks backed up to pick up the strewn cargo.

The lines - both eastbound and westbound lines were blocked by the wreckage - were expected to be cleared today. Railway ties were scored and broken for more than a mile.

"I heard the train coming down the tracks, that noise you're used to, and then all of a sudden it didn't sound right," said Paul Monast, the first resident at the scene. "I jumped up and looked out and saw a pile going up and sparks going up in the air."

Monast, whose home is just across a field from the derailment site, met the crew coming up the track with flashlights.

When he saw the wreckage, he said, he couldn't believe it.

"You're so damned surprised, you don't know what to say or to do. You're kind of shocked."

John Van Bruinessen, Monast's neighbor, was also jolted out of bed by the crash.

"I knew something had happened," he said. "There was a big crash and a rumble and roar. We (he and Monast) took the truck down and when we saw a coupler on the ground I knew that it had separated."

Both men helped workmen pinpoint the worst areas of 'amage, including the Carl Smith crossing where the ties had been ripped out.

For other residents living along the tracks, seeing the wreckage answered the question of what they had heard during the night but had not given any more thought to.

"I was thinking the train was really, really loud last night," said Pauline White. "But I looked out the window and saw nothing and went back to bed. Then I got up at 8am and saw this.

"When I moved to a small town I thought I wouldn't have this kind of excitement."

Bob Delorme was taking a nap in his truck at Nutrite Fertilizer before starting his early morning shift when he heard "something like an earthquake".

"It sounded like a bunch' of tin- crumpling up and it went on for about five minutes," he said. "But I didn't pay much attention."

"I've been living here 38 years and I've never seen anything like this," said Harold Armstrong. "When I heard the noise last night I thought it was a truck going over the crossing."

"It's a hell of a mess," said CP truck driver Garnet Sands of Smiths Falls. "I've seen a lot of pictures of derailments but I wasn't expecting anything quite like this."

05/10/1984 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg Bells Corners

Tender Call. CN Rail has called for tenders for the construction of an embankment to replace the bridge over the former CP mainline at Bells Corners (Mile 12.44 of CN's Beachburg Subdivision). Work consists of supplying, placing and compacting approximately 20,000 cubic meters of fill material. Tender close was October 16.

29/11/1984 Ottawa Citizen Alexandria Ottawa New

The City of Ottawa and CN Rail are considering an underground reservoir to control oil seeping into the Rideau River from the Ottawa Station. The proposed reservoir would be linked to a storm sewer on the east bank of the river near Hurdman Bridge. Oil would be pumped out of the reservoir regularly so it would not flow into the river. An above ground reservoir was proposed but the National Capital Commission, which owns the land, wants the more expensive underground reservoir.