

BCR's 'great fiasco' lost \$74m in 6 years

FORT NELSON, B.C. (CP) — The royal commission on British Columbia Railway affairs was unable to discover at its hearing here Friday who the "someone on high" was who gave the order to build the 250-mile rail link from here to Fort St. John, B.C.

The hearing was told the extension was "one of the greatest railway fiascos of our time" and that in just six years of operation the line has run up \$74 million in losses, which represents \$100,000 for each of the 700 Fort Nelson jobs dependent on B.C. Rail.

The total loss projected by 1981 is \$111 million plus \$50 million for planned upgrading.

The line has experienced a staggering 270 derailments in the last two years and a total of 75 operation disruptions.

The latest, at Ellah Lake last week, will put the line out of action for at least four weeks and could cost more than \$500,000 to repair. More than

130 lumber mill workers in Fort Nelson have been laid off as mills seek alternative means of transportation.

The decision to build was made July 8, 1968.

B.C. Rail officials testified Friday that they were given a tight completion time which was apparently met by September, 1971, when the line was ready for use.

Gordon Ritchie, executive assistant to B.C. Rail vice-president Mac Norris, said he had no idea who set the completion date in 1968.

"It was someone on high," said Ritchie. "As a management group we were told to build the extension at the same time we were told to start the work on the line toward Dease Lake."

Ritchie said instructions were given by former B.C. Rail vice-president J. S. Broadbent but it was not known where those orders originated.

The Crown railway's board

at the time included Social Credit cabinet ministers and was chaired by former premier W. A. C. Bennett.

Expected use of the line was based on four studies, Ritchie said, which predicted B.C. Rail revenues of \$20 million by 1977. In reality, the projected revenue for this year stands at \$5 million.

Walter Shtenko, chief of the railway's engineering services, testified that problems increased on the line with the laying of track without ballasting. "This created depressions."

"During the laying of steel, plywood was placed on one large section of the grade under the ties in order to sustain the loads," said Shtenko, who added the line was so poor at one time that repair crews followed freight trains on the line and waited for derailments.

Shtenko agreed the line could be called "one of the greatest railroading fiascos of our time" and estimated it would cost \$375 million today to build the line from scratch.

In other testimony Friday, Walter Young, B.C. Rail marketing director, said rail development emphasis has switched toward the south with the advent of coal developments and this means no new developments going ahead north of Fort Nelson.

Friday's hearing marked the end of a 16-day tour of communities along the B.C. Rail route which begins at North Vancouver and ends in this northern community. The hearings continue today in Vancouver.

ASHCROFT FIRE

Police suspect arson

ASHCROFT, B.C. (CP) — Police said today arson is now suspected by fire authorities as the cause of Thursday night's fire which devastated a block of downtown Ashcroft.

RCMP Sergeant Jim Aird said a representative from the provincial fire marshal's office found indications that a flammable material started the blaze, which began in a

small empty shed.

He said no official damage estimate will be available until next week. Eight businesses and three dwellings were destroyed in the fire and police now say six persons were left homeless.

Meanwhile, Mayor Mike Yewchin said council decided Friday to help the merchants affected rebuild.

WEATHER

VANCOUVER (CP) — High-low temperatures issued Monday by the weather office and precipitation (in millimetres) for the previous 24 hours:

Cranbrook	28	11	—
Penticton	27	11	—
Revelstoke	24	11	1.8
Vancouver	19	10	—
Prince Rupert	15	8	3.0
Stewart	16	9	0.4
Port Hardy	17	10	0.6
Tofino	13	10	3.2
Comox	20	11	—
Victoria	22	11	—
Prince George	15	5	0.6
Blue River	15	9	9.0
Kamloops	27	12	TR
Dawson City	19	7	5.4
Whitehorse	20	8	—
Fort St. John	19	7	—

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Star power

Singer Pat Boone gestures to an enthusiastic Coliseum audience Friday night. Boone entertained about 2,500 people in a two-hour program of Christian songs and testimony.

Citizen photo by Dave Milne

GRACE MCCARTHY

Weed program defended

PENTICTON, B.C. (CP) — Provincial secretary Grace McCarthy said Sunday that criticism of the province's program to use 2,4-D on weeds in the Okanagan Lakes amounts to harassment of tourists in the area.

Speaking at the 25th annual convention of the Florists' Transworld Delivery Association, she said, "go and tell your friends that the Okanagan is beautiful, clean, and that it welcomes you."

"This part of the province has received bad publicity... from people who feel they cannot live with the water, but rather than leave, choose to

harass the people who do come here."

She was referring to the efforts of the Okanagan Environmental Coalition to inform Okanagan residents and visitors that some of the lakes in the valley have been treated with the herbicide.

The coalition, a group of citizens who opposed the use of 2,4-D in the fight against the Eurasian milfoil water weed, have indicated they will hand out pamphlets in the Okanagan and pay for advertisements in B.C. and Alberta warning people that the chemical has been used.

The herbicide was put into

the northeastern part of Skaha Lake last week. Beaches on the lake have been posted and fenced off to prevent the public from entering the water.

Coalition spokesman Tina Kramer said Sunday that police have failed to patrol the area of Skaha Lake treated with 2,4-D and that eager swimmers have rolled up portions of the snow fence erected to keep them out.

Ms. Kramer said swimmers invaded the mile-long stretch of beach only hours after government officials treated the water with herbicide impregnated in clay pellets.

ALCOHOL PROBLEM

Indians 'have to do job'

VANCOUVER (CP) — The Indian co-ordinator of an alcohol and drug abuse program said Friday white men can't solve the Indian drinking problem because "we have to do the job ourselves."

Michael Thrasher, co-ordinator for the prison program of the Nechi Institute on Drug and Alcohol Abuse, was speaking to a graduating class of 24 Nechi trainees who will

return to their reserves to do counselling on alcohol problems.

"We were given alcohol," said Thrasher, "but we weren't told how to use it. It's not part of our culture."

Nechi has three recovery centres. Thrasher said and three alcohol treatment centres in Alberta that "are always full."

If the program is a success,

someday he'll be out of a job, he told the graduates.

Seventy-three counsellors have graduated from the Nechi program since April, 1976.

Gordon Butler, director of the Pacific region medical services of Health and Welfare Canada, said all the government can do "is supply the money so the Indians can help themselves."

Butler said that last week he visited a reserve where a Nechi counsellor had just started a program and "an Alcoholics Anonymous had already been formed and seven people were attending."

"The only way to treat Indian alcohol abuse is to use Indian," he said. "I don't think white people can do it."

Nechi is an Alberta-based organization funded jointly by Health and Welfare and the department of Indian affairs.

SEARS AD CORRECTION

In June 22nd edition of the Citizen, the Sears advertisement for a 16 hp tractor, the tractor insignia should read 16 hp not 18 hp as in picture.

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The Citizen

Provincial

HOTEL VANCOUVER

Picket violence prompts closure

VANCOUVER (CP) — Signs were posted on all doors at the Hotel Vancouver Sunday night announcing that the building was closed.

Accommodation had been found for all but a handful of the guests at other hotels and these will be gone in a day or two.

"Everything was very orderly at all doors as the last of the conventions ended and all of the delegates returned to their home town," a management spokesman said.

A decision to close the hotel was made Friday when violence flared on the picket line and hotel general manager Denis Buchanan said the closure was in the interests of preventing injury or possible death.

It was the first time the hotel has closed since it opened in 1939 for the visit of George VI and Queen Elizabeth, mother of the present queen.

The hotel was built about 10 years earlier but never opened because of the Depression.

Spokesmen for the 475 members of Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers local 275 which has been on strike since June 12, say they don't believe the hotel will close permanently.

They said Canadian Na-

tional Railways recently spent \$20 million for renovations and will protect this investment.

The strike began when the company refused to offer a wage increase in new contract proposals. The hotel offered a dental plan and improved working conditions but said a slump in the city hotel business prevented an increase in wages.

The hotel had hired non-union workers to replace the strikers. No further talks are planned.

The province

BRIEFLY

Social workers ask for delay

VANCOUVER (CP) — The British Columbia Association of Social Workers called Friday for a three-month postponement of proposed provincial legislation to create juvenile jails.

The social workers say B.C.'s experience with juvenile jails is dismal, and asked that proposed legislation be reviewed by a legislative committee and regional justice councils, which operate under the attorney-general's department.

Grapes okay

VANCOUVER (CP) — A nine-year hot declaration by the British Columbia Federation of Labor on all California grapes was lifted Friday.

Len Guy, secretary-treasurer of the labor federation, said United Farm Workers leader Cesar Chavez recently told the federation it would be appropriate to lift the ban following an agreement between the U.F.W.U. and the Teamsters Union over representation of California farmworkers.

'Racism fostered'

VANCOUVER (CP) — A Toronto lawyer said Friday that the federal government is encouraging discrimination by fostering the belief that immigrants worsen the unemployment situation.

Charles Roach, an official of the International Committee Against Racism, said people create jobs—"they tend to consume just like everyone else."

TOURIST ALERT

VANCOUVER (CP) — Monday's tourist alert issued by the RCMP. Following persons are asked to contact the nearest detachment of the RCMP for an urgent personal message:

Tom and Irene Britton of Centralia, Wash.
Timothy Douglas Harshbarger of Oregon
Vernon Gerald O'Shell of Vancouver
Alexander Gerald Shinn of Kelowna, B.C.

Damages may reach \$180,000

ALEXIS CREEK, B.C. (CP) — Police say damage to the historic Chilcotin Hotel, which burned to the ground early Saturday could go as high as \$180,000.

A police spokesman said cause of the fire is not yet known, but a fire inspector from Vancouver was to be in this Central Interior town today to investigate the blaze.

Police said the 50-year-old hotel was unoccupied when the fire broke out around 1:10 a.m. The adjacent Indian Health Services Hospital, which also was unoccupied, suffered damage to one wall. A store on the other side of the hotel suffered smoke damage. There were no injuries.

Police said the hotel owners have not decided whether to rebuild the three-storey structure.

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