

A Community presents its case

Brief from Chamber of Commerce and Development Commission

First it should be made clear to all concerned that the Acton Chamber of Commerce does not support "featherbedding" of any kind, nor do we believe in doing business in an irrational or uneconomical manner. However, we do believe that the concept of service is a valid, even necessary, approach to doing business.

The Town of Acton is a manufacturing town, moreover it is an exporting town and in the days when export figures were published Acton exported more than Georgetown and Brampton combined. In 1965 our exports amounted to a fraction less than \$20 million and of course our imports were of corresponding significance, approximately \$11 million.

I suggest that a town which moves goods for \$31 million per year provides a good economic background for anyone in the transportation business, and probably one of the reasons why this town can show these high manufacturing figures is that the C.N. decided to build a station here.

To do business you must have a desire to serve your customers to their satisfaction.

The Chamber recently surveyed all industries and commercial enterprises in Acton and all answers received declared themselves dissatisfied with the Canadian National Railway's attitude to doing business. Those who did not answer when queried replied that the C.N. did not care about their views. Their beliefs were that the Canadian National was following a master plan of closing stations in smaller towns everywhere and nothing we could do or say would stop it. Enclosed is a sample of the Chamber of Commerce questionnaire.

Of course, the C.N. still provides Freight and Express service to this town, but in a manner which is much less attractive to its customers. Personally, I often picked up my shipments at the station at 8 o'clock in the morning, rather than waiting for delivery by the local carrier. In those days, we invariably had overnight service from Toronto.

We, in the Chamber, believe that the C.N. station has contributed to this Town's business life and, although we cannot document it, we believe the C.N. has derived a reasonable profit from its operation here. We have not been shown anything to the contrary, neither has the C.N. provided us with any proof that it will derive a greater profit from operating under a Kitchener-Guelph master agency plan.

It may be better for Canadian National's business in the whole region, but we doubt if it is better for anybody in Acton to deal with an out-of-town agent.

We are also concerned with the future. It is conceivable that we will need an intensified commuter service in the future. Some people will be greatly inconvenienced immediately when this station is closed. We fear that once closed it will be very difficult to have the station reopened no matter what the need might be. Also, it is a safety feature to have an operator at the station since he could receive and relay messages and in an emergency stop the train.

As this region becomes more and more urbanized and the roads more congested, the C.N. will have many more potential customers. It is conceivable there will be a technical breakthrough in transportation, making it possible to cheaply establish a GO-type service between this region and Toronto, in which case the C.N. station would be a valuable asset for all concerned.

We therefore recommend that if it is unavoidable to remove the staff from the station, that the building be retained and kept in good repair.

Brief from Rud Whiting, M.P. Halton

Rud L. Whiting, M.P. Halton, regarding the application of Canadian National Railways remove the agent at Acton, Ontario:

The closing of the Acton station next month by the Canadian National Railway is, in my opinion, a direct reflection on the image of Acton as a Community and a definite deterrent to the future progress of the town. I therefore, unequivocally endorse any action of the Municipality and the citizens of the Town in an effort to prevent such action on the part of the Railway.

It was just over a year ago, October 13, 1967 to be exact, that Mr. R. T. Vaughan, Vice-President of the Canadian National Railways wrote to Dr. Harry Harley who at that time was Federal representative for Halton County, advising him that the first stages of implementation of what the Railway calls the Master Agency plan would be put into effect on November 6th of that year.

This first stage Mr. Vaughan pointed out, involved the taking away of certain work from the station, and placing it in the hands of the Master Agency in Guelph, but that the Agent would remain on the premises but would not carry out any work as far as the public was concerned. This was to be in the nature of an experimental period which would probably last until mid-January or early February of this year.

The Railway further stated that following this trial period, the whole matter would be reviewed and looked at in the light of whether an application should be made to the Canadian Transport Commission for approval to institute the Master Agency plan in this area. Apparently the matter was reviewed by the Railway and a decision made in the light of its effect on railway operations alone. No users of the railway were asked to give any facts or express their views as to the effect of this rearrangement of service. It would almost appear to be a case of the public be damned.

Only now in this hearing are the Municipality, organizations, and individuals being given the opportunity to express their views.

Only now is this being done, after advertisements have been prepared for the local press and announcements to be sent through the mail announcing the demise of the C.N.R. station in Acton, and its replacement by the Master Agency plan.

We are aware that the Master Agency plan has already been introduced by the Railway in various areas throughout the country in order to effect internal economies. This as citizens, we must applaud. The Canadian National being a Crown corporation, any operating savings reflect directly on the Canadian taxpayer.

However, there is also a question of equity involved in this plan. In order to save money for the railway and the rest of the country, the people of Acton are being asked to pay a high price. One single but costly example which was brought to my attention was clearance of shipments "In Bond". These must now be done in Guelph and while certain companies heretofore employed their own brokerage department, they now have the added cost and inconvenience of using a Customs Broker in Guelph.

But equally important to added costs and inconvenience, people will endure these things if they feel it is for the common good, is the psychological effect of this move on the Community.

Acton has a lot to offer to prospective industry. It is a town beautifully situated in a setting of agriculture and unspoiled surroundings. It is close to Metropolitan markets and populated areas. It is a town with a progressive plan for orderly development. Acton as envisaged by the Canadian National would, in my opinion, have a retrograde effect that would be difficult to ameliorate.

One of the reasons why the people of Canada have been willing to support the Canadian National Railways was because of the unifying and development influences they have been able to exert. The people are willing to recognize a certain deviation from practices inherent in the private enterprise system on their part.

In the closing of the Acton station as proposed by the Canadian National Railway, it is my opinion that the welfare of the people of Acton is a much more important consideration than any economic gains on the part of the railroad.

Rud L. Whiting, M.P.

Producers honor Legion Choraliers

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Councillor Ted Tyler said it would be better if the M.Z.B. students walked along the side of the highway to Acton Blvd. and crossed there with the crossing guard. "It's a matter of changing the pattern" he said. It was pointed out there is no sidewalk there.

Flashing lights will be installed at the Mill and Park corner in an effort to slow traffic on Mill St. One red light will face Park Ave. and the two amber lights will face east and west on Mill. Other solutions for the traffic problem here are being considered.

There are two more traffic problem corners. A letter will go to the Department of Highways concerning the possible installation of amber lights at Young and Eastern Ave., and at Main and Guelph.

The latter, near Toth's garage, involves the junction of two highways. Turning left from Highway No. 7 onto highway 25 north involves going up a grade to the railroad track.

A traffic survey is to be conducted here soon.

Deputy-reeve Dr. Oakes mused a second or two and announced "Bud McDonald was the reeve when this problem first rose!" At a committee meeting, the clerk had been asked to contact several commercial establishments to request a "clean-up". Councillor Tyler said he noticed the work was being done at one place already.

Asphalting of Peel St. ditches will not be completed until the drainage on Churchill Rd. N. is finished.

Restrictions in heavy traffic might be instituted on Churchill Rd. S., due to the rapid deterioration of the surface. The clerk was to check with the Department of Highways.

The meeting was unusually short, ending at 9.30 p.m. All council members were present with clerk Joe Hurst.

station—even removing the telephone and left him sitting as a useless individual. The agent knows this, too. The C.N.R. is not giving Acton a fair shake if it removes him and closes the station," concluded Mr. Goodwin.

The chairman said he would make his report to the Railway Transport Committee and they would make the final decision on the matter.

Would the report be made public?

"No", Mr. Rupert said, closing the books and adjourning the meeting.

Railway representatives at the hearing included Mr. Giles, Don Croft, L. A. Wood, H. Sharpe, H. D. Kinlock and Gord Souter.

Brief from Student Council Acton District High School

Student Brief Re C.N.R. Closing of Acton Station:

The reason for this student brief regarding the closing of Acton's railway station is to show that the young people of Acton are not apathetic towards community affairs. They realize that they are the ones who will live with decisions that are made today. The student body of Acton High have demonstrated their opinion on this matter through a poll conducted at the school. An overwhelming majority of 92 percent are opposed to the closing of the station. After a detailed analysis into this controversial matter, this committee has arrived at several conclusions. It feels that this student brief should receive an unbiased and just consideration.

FROM AN ECONOMIC VIEWPOINT

The C.N.R.'s lack of proper services has in the past caused Acton industry to adopt other modes of freight transportation which has proved more costly to them and results in no business for C.N.R. This trend should not have to continue if the C.N.R. accommodates to our industrial needs. Acton is in a 40 mile radius of Toronto and is in the centre of a highly industrial area which should show that it is beneficial to C.N. to have here an open station.

As taken from the Oct. 16, 1968, issue of the "Acton Free Press" the annual report of C.N. showed passenger service was a profit making operation for the year 1967. Therefore we conclude that the C.N.R. cannot be losing money and is using this as a poor excuse.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Acton is a dormitory town with one third of the population working outside of town and with one third of the labor force from out of town. Acton is an ideal spot for the overflow of Toronto area residents to make their home. In the past 15 years two new subdivisions have been constructed and another is getting underway in the spring. It is necessary that there be an equal balance of industry and residential taxpayers to prevent an overload of taxes on the residents as was the case in Oakville. Unless railway facilities are provided new industries will exclude Acton from their choice of future sites and the proper balance will be upset. It is necessary to remind you that the C.N.R. is a government company into which every taxpayer in Acton has been paying for over a century.

SERVICE VIEWPOINT

An example of the deplorable service to this community was illustrated less than 48 hours ago. Two telephone calls were placed, one in the morning and one in late evening. In both calls the Zenith number listed, connected with the freight service which has no available information concerning passenger schedules. In one call passenger schedules department was finally connected after a one and a half hour delay. We found that in order to obtain this information, one must call a long distance number. This is contrary to a weekly advertisement placed in the local newspaper. Previously information and tickets were readily and easily available.

FINAL CONCLUSION

We feel that if the C.N.R. closes the station the railway or the citizens of Acton should put the building to some constructive use and not let it fall to ruins. It is our opinion that if the C.N.R. is not willing to provide a useful service for Acton, then our citizens should not be submitted to the air pollution, traffic hazard, noise making and general nuisance resulting from the passing of trains through their community. Two weeks ago a woman was fatally injured in this town. Therefore we think these hazards should be eliminated by rerouting the railway line unless it can be of service to us.

We are paying for C.N.R. train service. We don't have it. We want it.

Ad Hoc Committee of Student Council.

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FULL NUMBER

When an operator asked a long distance caller at a coin telephone what number he was calling from, she got no response.

"The number," she explained, "is right there on the dial."

After a brief hesitation, the caller replied: "Oh, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-0."

\$ apples

Scouts and Cubs raised about \$240 last Saturday, when they held their yearly Apple Day. Rotarians assisted with transportation. The shiny apples were the boys' way of saying "Thank you" for donations.

Must stop

This week's safety tip from Const. T. R. Penrice, Safety Officer of Milton O.P.P. concerns school buses.

With the school term now in full swing, the attention of drivers is again directed to Sec. 94 (2) of the Highway Traffic Act.

"Sec. 94 (2) Where a school bus is stopped on a highway or part of a highway on which the maximum speed limited is greater than 35 miles per hour for the purpose of receiving or discharging school children, the driver of a vehicle,

(a) when overtaking a school bus on which the words "do not pass when signals flashing" are marked and two red signal-lights are illuminated by intermittent flashes; and (b) when meeting on such a highway, other than a highway

with separate roadways, a school bus on the front of which two red signal-lights are illuminated with intermittent flashes, shall stop the vehicle before reaching the school bus and shall not proceed until the school bus resumes motion or the signal-lights are no longer flashing.

"Milton O.P.P. detachment has again this week received complaints of vehicles disobeying this section. When you are driving on our highways PLEASE be alert at all times. We do not want to have any of our children hurt, or killed, by a careless driver passing a stopped school bus," says Const. Penrice.

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Station Hearing

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Probably the most lively part of the meeting ensued when Jessie Coles and Mrs. Howard Dwyer, speaking from their experience as managers of mail order offices, related some of the problems they faced under a master agency.

Miss Coles said she had been working in the mail order office for 13 years and has never had to face such "shocking conditions" before. She told of countless occasions when orders didn't arrive, came only partly or couldn't be traced. "It's no joke" she told the railwaymen, when you have to face customers with the same stories of parcels not arriving.

"We had good service when we had the express here," she maintained.

Mrs. Dwyer was equally outspoken. The service is both "rotten" and "costly", she said. Simple little boxes arrive in shreds after obviously sitting somewhere. It takes over a week sometimes for parcels to arrive from Toronto.

Mr. Rupert and Express Superintendent L. A. Wood both said that there were some kinks to iron out yet in the master plan but the late shipments weren't necessarily the fault of the railway. Often the delay lay in the plant or warehouse from where they were shipped.

Brandishing copies of invoices and bills of lading, Roy Goodwin challenged to C.N.R. on that statement and related an experience he had had concerning a telegram which pointed out the importance of having an agency in Acton.

"These things didn't happen," said Mr. Goodwin, "when there was service in Acton. Our troubles didn't begin Nov. 6, 1967. Our troubles began when the express moved away in the first place. I'd do anything now but ship by express."

Asked why he didn't complain before, Mr. Goodwin replied he had no opportunity to and no choice but to look for a better means of transportation. Mayor Dwyer said this was the reason no major industries attended the meetings. They were happy with other service now.

Reeve Hinton stressed that the

high school brief brought up a good point in planning for the future. He was concerned about rapid transit and passenger service as well as being receptive to the idea of a dormitory town.

Goods and services are a hard thing for "laymen" to understand, however, the reeve said. He suggested the C.N.R.'s master agency plan required the same kind of intestinal fortitude school boards must have to implement new educational concepts despite criticism.

Local people had not taken advantage of the situation the railway created when it withdrew service by substituting service of their own. He maintained the service shutdown had been beneficial to local truckers who now carried the goods the railway lost. Many are employed with these companies, so the result is more jobs for local people.

This brought a question from Mrs. Dwyer who asked Mr. Hinton how local companies benefited if the station was closed.

"What you are saying is nothing, really!" she admonished the reeve. "Do we have local transport companies delivering the express?" "NO—and the Acton company that bid for the contract, was turned down."

The chairman said the express didn't matter in this meeting because the railway would never go back to delivering from small stations. He stressed that the meeting was to decide how a man at the station would affect business.

"Remove the agent," said Mrs. Dwyer, "and you are going to lose any of the business you have in Acton."

Questioned by Mrs. Gloria Browne and the mayor, Mr. Giles said Georgetown station would remain open but he thought Fergus was going to be closed although he was unsure of the latter.

Was Acton station losing money? Not likely, answered Mr. Giles who admitted the railroad had no means of knowing whether a single station lost or made money.

"The C.N.R. has done everything it could to do away with the agent at the Acton