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Milwaukee Road aid advances

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The House Commerce Committee approved legislation Thursday to maintain operations on the Milwaukee Road for 45 days, bringing Congress one step closer to postponing the largest railroad shutdown in U.S. history.

The Senate passed a similar bill Wednesday night providing a 60-day continuation of service with federal money.

The Commerce Committee bill, approved 23-15, would provide $15 million to $20 million in federally guaranteed loans to keep the railroad going. It likely will come before the full House after the Memorial Day recess.

The trustee of the Milwaukee Road has asked a federal court in Chicago to embargo service on about three-fourths of the system, including all its lines west of Miles City, S.D., to the Pacific Northwest and all of its extensive operations in Iowa.

A core system of about 2,400 miles would remain, running from Louisville, Ky., through Chicago to the Twin Cities, Duluth and to Miles City with a few other lines in that vicinity. The railroad's bankruptcy trustee says the remaining lines could be made profitable.

But the states that would lose service — Iowa, Montana, the Dakotas, Idaho and Washington — object not only to the loss of some of their rail freight service but to the loss of employment.

The bills now working their way through Congress essentially are holding actions to give Congress time to work out a permanent solution.

If the railroad is shut down, other railroads in the area could be ordered to operate over some portions of the railroad to serve major shippers.

Rail line sale possible

IRON MOUNTAIN, Mich. (UPI) — The Milwaukee Road may be preparing to sell its Green Bay, Wis., to Ontonagon, Mich., line to a short line operator, possibly within the next two months, Michigan newspapers reported Thursday.

The Interstate Commerce Commission is considering an application by the bankrupt railroad to abandon the 206-mile line between northern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

According to press accounts, at least four firms are interested in buying the line. Tom Phillips, a spokesman for the railroad, confirmed there have been purchase negotiations involving several parties.

Of particular concern to area planning groups is the status of the Marinette to Crivitz branch line in Wisconsin, which angles off the Green Bay-Ontonagon line to Marinette. The line is not listed for abandonment, although no traffic has been run over it for almost two years.

The entire Milwaukee Road system has been involved in bankruptcy proceedings since 1977, and its fate is expected to be decided within the next few weeks by a federal judge in Chicago.

Toxic substances are everywhere, two UW profs say

By United Press International

Toxic substances endanger the health of virtually every Wisconsin resident, two University of Wisconsin professors told the Assembly Natural Resources Committee Thursday.

"Where are toxic substances?" asked Joseph Delfino, director of the UW Environmental Sciences Section and state Laboratory of Hygiene. "They're everywhere."

John Rankin, chairman of the UW Department of Preventive Medicine, said asbestos and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) were recognized as chief among the toxic substances threatening man today.

Rankin said epidemiological studies indicated asbestos was the cause of between 35 and 44 percent of cancer deaths. He said between 8 million and 11 million workers have been exposed to asbestos since World War II.

"PCBs we can find anywhere we look for them today," Rankin said. He said they could be found in the fat of polar bears in the arctic and the milk of nursing mothers.

Rankin also said substances found in plastics were the cause of many deaths during fires. He said many deaths ruled due to smoke inhalation were really caused by poisonous gases from plastic materials burned in fires.

Rankin said new chemicals were being produced at the rate of 2,000 a year, but it takes at least three years to test one for harmful effects.

Delfino said that besides cancer and death, toxic substances can cause behavior abnormalities, genetic mutations, reproductive malfunctions or physical deformities.

Both urged legislators to establish an agency that could monitor and control the production and disposal of toxic substances in Wisconsin. Rankin estimated initial costs at between $100,000 to $250,000 a year on a contingency basis.

'Why didn't you say you wanted it that bad?'

WHATLINGTON, England (AP) — John Naylor had a house he wanted to sell. Kevin Reardon wanted to buy it. Trouble was that Naylor wanted about $191,000 and Reardon was only prepared to go to $153,000.

"So why don't we fight for it?" Suggested Naylor, 45, a former army boxing champion. And they did just that, on a makeshift ring in front of the eight-bedroom, 17th century house — appropriately near a town called Battle.

While villagers, pints of beer in their hands, cheered the two men on, they slugged it out. Naylor was floored 16 times in the first two rounds, and decided he would sell the house to Reardon, 38, for $153,000.

Schmidt new assistant state attorney general

Attorney General Bronson C. La Follette announced the appointment Thursday of Jerome S. Schmidt as an assistant attorney general.

Schmidt, 34, has been in private practice in Madison. He will be assigned to the criminal appeals unit in the Justice Department.

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