

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

Thus, I revert to my speech which follows my comments of October 11.

I was then asking the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer), if the unfortunate decision taken by the C.N.R. management that passenger service at Victoriaville would be discontinued completely, was irreversible.

Tonight, my remarks will be brief and especially directed to shed some light on a situation that has brought out a general outcry among the population of the area of Bois-Francis.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the minister was absent and you suggested that I put this question on the order paper. If I want to discuss it tonight, it is on account of the obvious urgency of the matter, because if I put it on the order paper, I would not get a reply until way after October 27.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this decision will be in force on October 27. That is a very serious matter. The Bois-Francis area, including the cities of Princeville, Arthabaska, Warwick and Victoriaville, as well as the rural and neighbouring regions, has a population of over 35,000. The whole area has a national reputation, I would say, thanks to the size of its manpower, its industry and its trade.

As a matter of fact, the Bois-Francis area is a furniture and textile centre. Its trade is extremely important. I wish to point out that the people there voted *créditiste*, but the increasing prosperity of the Bois-Francis area is now threatened because the road and communications network is out of date.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, Victoriaville is located about 100 miles from Montreal and the C.N.R. trains take over three and a half hours to cover the distance.

Secondly, Victoriaville is less than 75 miles away from Quebec City and there again, the Canadian National passenger service is absolutely unacceptable.

Thirdly, we have no direct junction line with the Trans-Canada highway, and it is not necessarily my intention to get elected to Quebec to acquaint them with the problem, as they are not even aware of it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say at this point that we are told that the Canadian National passenger services are uneconomical in Victoriaville. I would like to ask the minister or his representative what are the grounds for asserting that the services in Victoriaville are uneconomical. Is it because the

[Mr. Fortin.]

present services are out-of-date and unsuitable? Is it because the people do not use them?

I believe it is a good reason for people not to use it; it is because the existing services are outmoded and inadequate.

Mr. Speaker, before removing such an essential service as that one in an area where railways are the only important means of communication, have the heads of the Canadian National Railways conducted a responsible and thorough inquiry with the people? What was their decision based upon? That is what I should like to know and what I am asking on behalf of the people, who want an answer without delay.

• (10:00 p.m.)

I am therefore asking first, that the minister order an inquiry if it has not yet been done, in order to clearly establish the economic viability or non-viability of this passenger transportation service.

Secondly, that the minister inquire about the possibility—and that is the point I am driving at—of improving that service, taking into account the needs of modern society.

Thirdly, it is not necessarily through the abandonment of all uneconomic services that an enterprise can necessarily be made a profitable one if beforehand—and I start from such a principle—we have not made sure whether the service could be made economic by improving and modernizing it.

Fourth, let the minister order the immediate revision of this most unfortunate decision which will certainly not promote the expansion and development of the region of Bois-Francis which has a most dynamic population.

Fifth, I would ask the minister to have a more modern railway station built, one better adapted to the needs of these areas, since the present one is falling in ruins.

Mr. Speaker, I shall conclude my remarks by maintaining that the C.N.R. should be there to serve the people and their interests. It must adapt its administrative policy to the present needs of our society; it must try to improve its services continually, whereas in Victoriaville, as elsewhere, services have in fact become worse. Since the C.N.R. is a Crown corporation, financed by the money of the taxpayers, it must serve the taxpayers and must be adapted in such a way that important regions such as that of Victoriaville are not neglected.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the population of this region very much affected by the decision which is to come into force of October