

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

The minister, with such data, can appreciate, I believe, the fact that all these people who have their hearts set on the economic development of this particular area, stood up and asked him, as well as the Canadian National authorities, to endeavour to study the matter more closely and to postpone the abandonment of the passenger service between Quebec and La Malbaie.

Evidently, the minister will tell me that a deficit exists. There is a deficit, no doubt. However, I am personally convinced that a public service is not a company that must register profits, but rather an organization that must serve the population. That, to my mind, is public service.

If the Canadian National Railways want to talk about losses when it comes before the Board of Transport Commissioners, we will also talk about the tremendous profits it made with its freight train between La Malbaie and Quebec city.

Mr. Speaker, ours is part of an area which has been designated, which is under-developed. Now, nothing is more important in such an area than adequate means of transport or communications.

The C.N.R. has done everything possible to prepare the abandonment of passenger service between Quebec city and La Malbaie. Rusty old cars were placed at the disposal of the public. The service was not publicized, and the hours were not adapted to the needs of the travelling public.

Today, of course, after five years of study, we are told: There are deficits. If the C.N.R. has deficits it is simply because it planned that deficit to be able to go before the Board of Transport Commissioners and say: There, gentlemen, we have no more money and we have to give up the service.

I make a very special plea to the minister. Our area has economic problems. It has a historic past. Particularly during centennial year, when we expect to welcome a great number of tourists, which will help considerably our tourist industry, I think it would be economic ruination if the minister did not recommend to the C.N.R. to give up its idea to discontinue its passenger service between Quebec city and La Malbaie.

I think the minister is aware of the problem, because he has the picture. I trust his sense of fairness and I thank him for having come this evening to listen patiently to the grievances of people who claim to be distressed by that decision of the C.N.R. I am convinced that in the face of all those facts, the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix):—will honestly appeal to C.N.R. authorities and ask them to give it a try for at least two more years, to adjust the schedules—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The time allotted to the hon. member has now expired.

[*English*]

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I can very well understand the feelings of the population served by the railway between Quebec city and Murray Bay, which feelings have been put so feelingly by the hon. gentleman. He knows what the population there perhaps do not all know, namely that this is a matter that parliament saw fit to appoint a board to consider. I have no doubt that the board will consider all the representations that have been made by the municipalities, by the legislature of Quebec, by the city of Quebec and by all those other interested parties.

I can assure the hon. gentleman that I will draw to the attention both of the C.N.R. and of the board the representations that he has made this evening. He will realize of course that it would not be proper for me personally as minister to attempt to bring any pressure on the board one way or the other. There is an appeal from the board to the governor in council, and it would be inappropriate for me to take any part in this process, when later on there might be the need to exercise judgment upon the judgment of the board.

However, Mr. Speaker, may I say that I have every sympathy with the sentiments expressed by the hon. gentleman, and anything I can properly do I assure him I will do.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 10.31 p.m.