

Supply—Transport

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps the hon. member could stay in his seat and not be jumping up and down. I might add that I spend practically every day that the house is in session in my place in the house defending the Atlantic provinces.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Chairman, I should like to direct a question—well, it is a statement, not a question—to the Minister of Transport concerning the airport at Dawson Creek, British Columbia. This airport is 45 miles from Fort St. John and 85 miles from Grande Prairie. I have had the assurance that one airstrip would be paved and I want to know what progress has been made. In this part of Canada there are no children going to school hungry. It is in the heart of the oil country and the power project at Hudson Hope will bring thousands of people into the area. The Northern Alberta railway has curtailed the number of trips per week. Apparently the passenger business was not paying. I know that I rode back once and there were only three or four passengers on the train. If you want to get home in a hurry you have got to go by airplane. A large number of airplanes are based at Dawson Creek. They belong to the oil companies which are engaged in work there. We have just finished a \$2 million hospital there which relies on airplane transportation to bring patients in and take them out. What progress is being made?

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, I will try to remember the correspondence we have had with the municipality concerned. As I recall, the last correspondence was a letter from me to the municipality suggesting that they make a proposition to us to enter into a cost-sharing program for building this airstrip. I should like to check the file but I do not think I have had an answer from the municipality since that time.

As the hon. member knows, we are very anxious and willing to co-operate with the municipality in every possible way. I know very well the tremendous interest that the hon. member for Cariboo has taken in this matter. He has been to see me about it on a great many occasions. He has brought the matter very fully to my attention, and I congratulate him on being a first-class example of a good member of parliament looking after his constituency. I can assure him that we will continue to pursue this matter with the municipality. I will look up the correspondence. As I say, as I remember, we asked them to submit a proposition to us so that we could examine it with regard to a cost-sharing scheme.

[Mr. Van Horne.]

Mr. Henderson: I believe they acceded to your request. I think you have a letter in your file.

Mr. Hees: If I have I will certainly go to work on it right away. If there has been any delay, I am sorry, because it is not fair to the hon. member. He has pushed this thing so hard, and he is doing such a good job for his constituency that I would not like to slow down the progress he has made since becoming a member.

Mr. Granger: I have spoken once, Mr. Chairman, so I will not occupy much time. There is one problem that my district has to which I would ask the minister to give serious consideration, and that is the length of the operational season for Canadian National steamships in Newfoundland. I speak particularly, of course, of my own riding, northern Newfoundland and Labrador. The situation, briefly, is this: Around the end of the year, most of the boats have discontinued operations and in the spring it is usually around May 1 before the Canadian National coastal steamer service resumes operations. In some years, such as this year, the season is further advanced before the boats can operate. I realize that this is the result of climatic conditions over which we have very little control, and that the servicing of the northern seaports during the winter months will always be a problem.

However, I should like to point out here that a good many of these northern Newfoundland and Labrador communities are entirely dependent upon the Canadian National coastal steamship service for receiving food and supplies as well as the carriage of passengers. These people have to put in their winter supplies and hope that they have made sufficient provisions to carry them over until spring. As I said, this is because of the climatic conditions over which we have little control. Fortunately today we do have some control over ice conditions about which, at one time, it would have been impossible to do anything. I refer to the use of icebreakers to supplement the Canadian National coastal service.

I should like to say right here that the icebreaker service in Newfoundland has been such that I have every reason to say, and to believe, that whenever the services of an icebreaker are required in northern Newfoundland the minister's department has given prompt and sympathetic consideration to that need. I know, too, that I am leaving myself open to a charge that as soon as we get one improved service we want an additional service. I am afraid that is true, but that is progress. I should like the minister to look into