

*Committee on Railways and Shipping*

On the other hand, the then minister of transport, as well as the vice-president of the Canadian National asserted, both in the house and before the railway committee, that if a sufficient amount of traffic was guaranteed, the construction of our trunk-line would not be delayed.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Langlois) repeated it again in a speech he made last November in Roberval. He said to his listeners of the Saguenay area: "As soon as you can give us the same guarantees of 175,000 tons of freight per year, the Chibougamau-St.-Félicien trunk-line will be built".

I am told that these guarantees have been secured and supplied to the authorities of the Canadian National Railways.

On December 20, 1954, *Le Soleil* made the following comments on this news:

Prospects appear bright in the lake St. John area for the construction of the trunk line between lake Chibougamau and St. Félicien. The Canadian National Railways have all guarantees they required of a freight traffic of 175,000 tons per year in this lumbering and mining district which is now open to extraordinary development. For the time being, ten industrial establishments have undertaken to supply a total of 180,000 tons of freight, with the promise of bringing this amount to more than 400,000 tons when the new railway is in full operation.

The people of the area are going at it in no small way: eight large lumbering companies operating in this vast area north of lake St. John up to and beyond lake Chimougamau, over a distance of more than 200 miles, are getting ready to use the proposed railway for the transport of manufactured lumber shipped to various parts of the province. At the present time, they are using to a large extent the road that the provincial department of highways built some years ago, and also the rivers flowing into lake St. John. They look forward to the improvement that the railway will bring for the rapid and safe transportation of their products.

In a speech delivered in Toronto last November, the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Lesage) advocated the construction of a railway line in the mining district of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories with the financial assistance of the federal government.

That is exactly what we asked for last year: a subsidy that would permit the Canadian National to undertake simultaneously the construction of the A and B sections of the Chibougamau railway. Besides, such a subsidy was granted in 1949 for the extension of the Pacific Great Eastern line from Quesnel to Prince George in British Columbia. And a precedent had been made in that respect in 1913 with the Ontario Northland.

The minister believed that the carrying out of such a project would be the best means to push the industrial development of our

[Mr. Gagnon.]

northern empire. After that conference, Mr. Charles Pelletier wrote in *L'Action Catholique* the following comments:

Mr. Lesage is indeed right. It is through the development of our means of communication, especially our railway lines, that it will be possible to integrate in our national economy areas which are rich in possibilities of all kinds but whose resources will not be adequately developed so long as they remain inaccessible. And it is perfectly normal for the government to help these transportation projects at the start until they become self-supporting through the developments that they initiate.

If the construction of railway lines had always depended on the guarantee of immediate profits, Canada would not be the great industrial country she is today.

But what is true of our northern districts is all the more so of districts which are much closer to our large centres and which are already developed to a certain extent, such as lake St. John and the Gaspé peninsula.

And further on:

Even if the eastern section of the railway were not immediately self-supporting, that would not be sufficient reason for putting off its construction when the progress of a large part of the province is at stake. As Mr. Lesage so aptly said, railway lines are essential to economic development.

They should not be looked upon as the result or the crowning of progress, but as its essential condition. After all, the pioneers who built up this kingdom of the Saguenay, and so largely contributed to the opening up of the Chibougamau district, deserve as much consideration as the few inhabitants of the Northwest Territories.

The article concludes with these words:

Our representatives in Ottawa should carefully avoid dual policies, so to speak: one for the province of Quebec, where railroads would only be built or maintained to the extent that they would bring immediate returns; and the other for the remainder of the country, where equipment expenses would be readily granted in anticipation of increased activities and wealth. It is up to them to explain and defend the position of their voters with the same determination as the members from other provinces. The new Minister of Transport (Mr. Marler) whose broad-mindedness and fairness are well known, will undoubtedly do his best to ease their task.

I say, and repeat for the benefit of those to whom the local topography of this part of our province is not familiar, that the length of the rail-route from Chibougamau to Chicoutimi is 220 miles, of which 139 are still to be built; the route from Chibougamau to Barraute, and from Mont Laurier to Montreal comprises 515 miles, 350 of which are still unfinished; while that from Chibougamau via Barraute, Noranda and North Bay to Toronto is 750 miles long, with 165 miles still to be built.

The distance from Chibougamau to the port of Chicoutimi is 220 miles shorter than to the next nearest seaport. And even in winter, as the route from Chibougamau to Montreal or Quebec is shorter via Chicoutimi, freight rates to or from Chibougamau would be even