

Maritime Transport

my father was a sailor and I was born in a seacoast village, I go to the harbours and I look at all the flags; but I never find a Canadian flag no matter how crowded the harbour. Whether it is Havana, Piraeus or anywhere else, you do not see the Canadian flag of commerce, yet less than a generation ago we had the fourth largest merchant navy in the world.

I thought that my colleague's remarks about the railways were profoundly true. There is no inherent opposition among the Canadian people to travelling by rail, but we have passed through a situation where it has become very difficult and inconvenient to use that particular mode. Timetables were inconvenient. The basic structures and infrastructures like the roadbed, coaches and so on became uncomfortable. Then, because people abandoned them for comfort, figures were presented which suggested that people did not care for this mode of travel. I predict that even in my time—and I am not nearly as young as the two other members who spoke, though I am not as old as I look, thank God—the day will come—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Just mature.

Mr. Macquarrie: Thank you, chancellor. The day will come when we will be laying new roadbeds. In this day with the energy realities that we face, the crowded public highways, there may, indeed, be a new era for the railways that can be ushered in with wisdom and with some concept that transportation is not only a public utility but, as the hon. gentleman has so well expressed, an ingredient of social unity and a powerful propellant of national development.

I fear that the hon. member's suggestion will die in this frenzied atmosphere in which everyone wants to cast themselves upon the electorate—for what reason I do not know because why should the Canadian electorate applaud the present government? In any event, we are in the dying days of this session—and it is an agonizing death as far as I am concerned—so I fear that the hon. member's suggestion will not be carried out. It would have been a fine thing for a committee to look into—the essential importance of transportation. There would have been no Dominion of Canada without the CPR and no CPR without Sir John A. Macdonald. One was as essential as the other. So my colleague from York-Sunbury is very much on sound historical ground, as he is on sound economic ground, in his recommendation today. I support him strongly and commend him heartily for his initiative, and I commend his advice to my colleagues in this chamber.

● (1622)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Albert Béchard (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, as one can imagine, I am quite pleased to take part this afternoon in a debate raised by the motion introduced by the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie). Two main reasons incite me to do so; first, ever since the Department of Regional Economic Expansion came into being, and even before, I have been asking and urging the various ministers and the government itself that transportation be included

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

in any regional expansion policy. The second reason is related with transport conditions in the area which I represent and more especially in my constituency. I refer to special means of air transport on the mainland as well as on the islands which are part of the Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine riding.

Is it necessary, Mr. Speaker, to remind the many members in the House this afternoon, as the previous speaker pointed out a while ago, that it is always a pleasure for me on Friday afternoon to take part in the debate, because the House is crowded? This year, however, we do have some spectators, that is the Canadian viewers on television. Is it necessary again to remind you and hon. members that I pointed out on various occasions in the House the necessary improvements which should be made to the Îles-de-la-Madeleine airport since it is essential to equip the Bonaventure constituency with airport facilities which would ensure regular air transport service for the inhabitants of that area? I apologize to my colleagues and to the Chair, who have repeatedly heard the hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) recite his requests, his demands, his grievances, his complaints in view of the disconcerting inaction, I regret to say, of the Department of Transport officials who could certainly have acted and reacted more promptly.

You will no doubt understand, Mr. Speaker, that I could not forego the opportunity afforded me by this debate to repeat these grievances. Sixteen years of experience in the House have taught me not to expect anything on a silver platter here. But if you do not succeed the first time, they say, try again. If reports of an upcoming election which we keep hearing these days prove to be true, this is probably the last opportunity I will have to speak on the subject as member of this House which, Mr. Speaker, has been a most exciting and enriching experience. I also want to commend the hon. member for York-Sunbury for his excellent initiative in moving and discussing this motion here this afternoon. As the characteristics of my region are not dissimilar to those described in the motion of the hon. member, I can only subscribe to his statements on this important question of transportation within our regions.

How, Mr. Speaker, can a government hope to do some regional development, to organize the economy of a given area, to reduce the economic disparities between various regions throughout the land, and especially in far eastern Quebec, which includes the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, without first developing an adequate transportation system? That is elementary, it seems to me. I agree, considerable efforts were made by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion with the help of and in co-operation with the various departments and the province of Quebec through the development program for eastern Quebec which includes the Lower St. Lawrence, the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, but in the field of air transport in particular, we have not been spoiled. How, for instance, can requests lie around