

*Supply—Transport*

Hon. Leon Balcer is entirely willing to transfer the Soulanges canal at the conditions set forth by Hon. Gerard Levesque. Hon. Balcer even offered to let me make that announcement on the opening night of the sports exhibition at the Mart, last March. Therefore, I am the only one who is opposed to the project as federal M.P. for Vaudreuil-Soulanges and I am ready to take all the blame. I have stated publicly my reasons for taking that stand. Just look at the facts, but please, be objective and tell the truth.

That letter was addressed to Mr. Filion of *Le Devoir*. Well, that is an unusual situation. The province of Quebec sets up a vast project and asks the federal government for the transfer of the Soulanges canal at certain conditions. The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges himself states in that letter: I am the only one who objects at the offer made by the province of Quebec. Therefore, the Minister of Transport is in favour of the original offer.

I would then ask the minister to tell us why the government would yield to the demands of a member—and I do not want to discuss the reasons the member may have to take such a stand—but how can the Minister of Transport abdicate his responsibilities because a member of that area stated: No, I do not want it.

I do not intend either to discuss now the judgment of the hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges. They say he has a very good judgment; I do not question that. But, when the bell rings, it is indeed unfortunate that he should forget it in a drawer of his desk instead of bringing it to the house.

Therefore, I would ask the minister to make some more remarks on this problem of the Soulanges canal, but before he does so, I tell him this: This is mainly a project of provincial interest, and nowadays it is of interest to the whole province.

I warn the minister that the Canadian government must have some really good reasons if it decides to turn down the offer of the province of Quebec and we will expect to be made aware of those reasons. I trust—

**Mr. Balcer:** Would the hon. member explain what offer of the province of Quebec he is referring to?

**An hon. Member:** The \$1 offer.

**Mr. Balcer:** Yes, the \$1 offer.

**Mr. Deschatelets:** Everyone knows that the province of Quebec has asked the government that the whole Soulanges canal be transferred to them, including the Cascades area, for \$1.

[Mr. Deschatelets.]

**Mr. Balcer:** Then that was a request, not an offer.

**Mr. Deschatelets:** I think the minister greatly underestimates this matter, and the letter from the hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges proves it. It is absolutely ridiculous for a member to say about that project: "I object, it shall not go through", when the same member adds: "I am the only one to object".

I leave that project to the minister's consideration and I urge him to raise the matter again in this house because he will hear about it again should the situation remain as is it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a few words about C.N.R. employees. About two months ago, the hon. member for Laurier introduced a motion to adjourn the business of the house, because in Montreal from 200 to 250 C.N.R. older employees were to be laid off, as a result of the sale to the province of Quebec of the McGill street buildings.

There you have another problem taken rather lightly by the minister, supported in that by some of his colleagues, among whom the member for Chambly-Rouville (Mr. Johnson), who said: "It is up to the province of Quebec to give jobs to those people; we have nothing to do with that problem."

Right from the start, we urged the government to make representations to the Canadian National Railways, asking them to keep those older employees and see to it that they be employed in the new building the company will soon occupy. This is the responsibility of the C.N.R. On the other hand the government has the responsibility to see that in a situation such as this, the C.N.R. keep on its payroll people who, otherwise, will be laid off.

Today, we say that "unemployment is everyone's concern". Industries where work is going at a slow pace are being told to keep their employees as long as possible, because unemployment is everyone's concern.

Well, in this regard, I cannot see why the C.N.R., which now has those employees on its payroll, should not keep them because, according to the projects of this company in the new building, it would award contracts for office cleaning, which would mean that those people would be out on the street.

Again, I urge the government to reconsider this situation because the hon. member for Laurier and all the opposition members from the Montreal region are quite sensitive on this matter. I hope the Minister of Transport, in