

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

may once and for all settle the problem of railway crossings.

Indeed, railway crossings are a danger in themselves. That is where the principle of maximum security comes into the picture. Regardless of what happened at Dorion, some newspapers seem to have the solution. The accident may have been caused by an irresponsible act on the part of a teen-ager. Nobody knows, but it would be unfortunate if such were the case. But that does not solve the problem of level crossings.

Solutions must be proposed, Mr. Speaker, and maximum security must be ensured now, under existing conditions. There are thousands of level crossings across the country where maximum security is non-existent. I realize that heavy expenditures would be involved, but nevertheless, realist solutions must be considered.

First of all, there is an overlapping of jurisdiction when it must be decided whether or not to install a protective system. As a matter of fact, the Board of Transport Commissioners pays 80 per cent of the cost of grade separation, whereas the railway company pays 5 per cent; on the other hand, the local authority, whether the province or the municipality which is the owner of the road contiguous to the right of way, will pay up to 15 per cent. The overlapping of jurisdiction: there is a sharing of expenses which at times prevent an efficient, positive and even immediate action, when desirable. This is why this overlapping of jurisdictions should be simplified and arrangements should be made so that a single authority will decide and pay.

In the second place, the following principle must be set. Emphasis must be laid on security everywhere. In certain places, tunnels and overpasses are necessary, especially in large urban centres where trains must travel at a rather high speed, because after all the traffic of trains cannot be stopped, trains must travel at a certain speed to reach the end of their journey.

However, Mr. Speaker, in large communities, such as Dorion, for instance, regardless of the expense incurred, it is essential I think, that there should be tunnels or viaducts.

Third, in cases where there are signs only, I believe that this is not enough, no matter where the railway crossing is located, whether it be in a small locality, like Val Alain in my constituency, for instance a very small locality where four persons were

[Mr. Choquette.]

caught by a train—where there are signs only, barely visible at night. Then perhaps consideration should be given to installing signal lights or, if the cost is too high, there is the system of convex mirrors which has been referred to and to which we could come back later.

● (10:10 p.m.)

That convex mirror system, Mr. Speaker, makes it possible to see the train coming from any direction. It has been studied by engineers and I have read the plan of the consulting engineers who say that its trial is worthwhile. That system is not expensive and could be used where there are signs only.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the problem of the speed of the trains should also be studied. When a train is going 80 miles an hour, there is certainly a danger no matter what small village or locality it goes through. Under the Criminal Code, a car driver who would travel at 80 or 90 miles per hour might be guilty not only of dangerous driving but probably of criminal negligence. The problem should be studied and steps taken to enforce a speed limit on all trains when they reach a railway crossing.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I come to the conclusion that the principle of maximum security is needed and, whatever it may cost, I think that in some places security must be increased, that the simple sign system must be abolished and either warning lights or convex mirrors set up; in short, steps must be taken to show that we care for human life. The minister has proved it and will do it again tonight because it is characteristic of the minister who is kind enough to answer me.

[English]

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I should like first of all to express my appreciation and, I think, the appreciation of all hon. members in our part of the house, of the eloquence and of the persistence with which the hon. member for Lotbinière has followed up this tragic business at Dorion. I quite agree that the tragedy at Dorion, important though it was in itself, shocking though it was, is intrinsically no more important than any other accident anywhere else in which a person loses his life at a level crossing.

I can assure the hon. gentleman that if any person in this country who has any suggestion to make for dealing with any aspect of