

The Address—Mr. Fairey

because the transportation facilities by sea between the lower end of Vancouver island and the mainland city of Vancouver are worse now than they have ever been in my lifetime. It is my hope that I may be permitted to lay detailed suggestions before the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marler). I sometimes wish that more members from the eastern provinces would follow the example of the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Leduc) who made his initial visit to the Pacific coast this past summer. They then would perhaps be able to follow me more clearly and understand the problem which confronts us.

For 50 years the British Columbia coast service of the Canadian Pacific Railway provided a first-class steamship service between Victoria and Vancouver and other ports, a service which could only be described as luxurious, with fine, fast ships beautifully kept and operated with high efficiency. In fact that line was the pride of the coast. Then the war took its toll of those ships. In the meantime new and faster methods of transportation, such as aircraft, skimmed the cream off the passenger traffic between Vancouver and Victoria except during the tourist season. When you realize that Trans-Canada Air Lines operate fourteen flights a day each way even in the winter—of course we do not have any winter in Victoria—you can realize how many passengers are lost to the steamship service. The result is that it is not profitable for the Canadian Pacific Railway to continue the former boat service.

While the competition for passenger traffic has been the major factor in the deterioration of the service, the failure to replace obsolescent ships with modern ferries has also been a contributing factor. The great development in the northern end of Vancouver island, where the establishment of new pulp mills and plywood plants seems almost a daily occurrence, makes it imperative that the port of Nanaimo be fully and adequately developed. That has been done by the C.P.R. They have provided modern vessels, new ferries able to handle fast, heavy, freight trucks.

Mr. Speaker, what I shall further say is intended in no sense to detract from the importance of Nanaimo, nor is it in any sense our intention to put Victoria in competition with the northern part of the island. Nanaimo serves the northern part of the island and Victoria the southern part. What we are demanding is a separate service which, with the assured growth of the northern part of the island and a like development in the south, will be to the benefit of the whole province and the whole country.

Be it remembered that 52 per cent of the population of Vancouver island reside south

of the height of land known as the Malahat, and that Victoria and vicinity contain over 135,000 persons. Whatever happens elsewhere, Nanaimo is ideally situated to serve the central and northern portion of the island but it cannot, because of the distance, adequately satisfy the needs of the south. Yet that is what we are asked to put up with. Passenger service by sea from Victoria to Vancouver is provided by obsolete ships running on a schedule which makes no attempt to connect with the transcontinental railways. It may surprise hon. members to know that in order to catch the train leaving Vancouver at 7.30 in the evening one has to leave Victoria the night before and stay over in Vancouver for a complete day.

An hon. Member: You are lucky.

Mr. Fairey: Moreover, the distance is too great and the voyage too long to appeal to ordinary businessmen. It is well known, Mr. Speaker, that freight now moves chiefly on wheels by means of large, heavy trucks, and Victorians are asked to be satisfied with, and to pay the additional costs for, a freight haul first from Vancouver to Nanaimo and then 70 miles to Victoria over a highway not suited for the traffic.

What is the remedy? It seems remarkable to me that a company that has enjoyed a monopoly of traffic for many years, and which has given good service, cannot see that there is a remedy easily available. No one expects the company to continue to operate this service at a loss. Therefore I make the suggestion that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marler), after examining the details, consent to having a proper engineering examination made of the whole of the Saanich peninsula. There are at least three sites on the Saanich peninsula, one of them being Sidney, which can be developed into year-round, every day of the year ports to which fast, modern ships could sail from Vancouver or Steveston, thereby reducing the sea voyage to a distance comparable with that between Vancouver and Nanaimo. The advantage to the southern end of the island would be that the freight haul on land would be 18 miles as against 70 miles from Nanaimo.

I have brought this matter before the house knowing full well that many members are not particularly interested and perhaps not particularly concerned, but it is a matter of importance for Victoria, a capital city, which is being left to stagnate while other parts of the country are growing by leaps and bounds.

I am deliberately trying to reduce the length of my remarks because I know it is