

Extension of Railway to Gaspé

in Canada and in the United States. As it is, our shipments are confined to a period of five months only, and the American markets are practically closed to our producers owing to lack of railroad facilities. In this respect it is worth noting that since the American markets are restricted to dressed lumber, our producers cannot sell on this market, because dressed lumber cannot be shipped by water without deterioration in transit.

I therefore strongly urge that a complete and thorough survey of the proposed extension be made now, so that the construction may be started in the very near future. I repeat that there is a natural obstruction to the construction of this railroad line, and the cost of building it would be relatively low.

Upon the construction of this extension depends the assurance of a sound economy for this region of Canada which I have the honour to represent in the house.

In conclusion, through you, Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister, to the government and to my colleagues in this House of Commons: "The fate of Gaspé is in your hands".

(Translation):

Mr. A. Phileas Cote (Matapedia-Matane): Mr. Speaker, if I resort now to my native tongue it is, first of all, to ensure its continued use, and maybe also because in this parliament it is unusual to speak French and to be understood by the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. St. Laurent), as is the case now, and also, I hope, by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew). It hardly seems possible that having spent twenty-five years of wedded life with his charming wife, who speaks and understands French so well, he would not have learned the beauties of the French language.

I have no wish to delay the progress of the debate on this motion which has already been discussed by the house. Still, I believe it to be my duty, as the member for Matapedia-Matane, to show this honourable house that the people of my constituency are broad-minded. If there were to be any opposition to this measure it should normally come from the member for Matapedia-Matane and from the splendid inhabitants of the town of Matane which is the terminal point on that line.

I would also point out to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier) that we who live in Matane, which is located in the lower St. Lawrence region, are not opposed to his St. Lawrence seaway project, although some claim that to make the St. Lawrence navigable as far as Toronto would be detrimental to Quebec. I make it a point of telling him that we have no objection to the Matane railway

[Mr. Langlois (Gaspé).]

going as far as Ste. Anne des Monts. The Matane board of trade and the Matane city council have already furnished evidence thereof. As their representative, I am anxious to reiterate their wishes.

However, if I may be permitted—I direct this request to my good friend and colleague from Gaspé (Mr. Langlois) and my good friend the Minister of Transport—to make a slight correction in the motion although I do not intend to move an amendment, I would say that before pushing the Matane railway as far as Ste. Anne des Monts, the Canadian National would be better advised to start by buying the Mont Joli-Matane railway, for the simple reason that this line has never given satisfactory service to date. It was the centre of a series of speculations which may have served private ends, but were never in the interest of the users.

For my part, after the election of 1945, I had to fight to get the company to reduce its freight rates. Thank goodness I succeeded, but only after many sacrifices and numerous attempts. The freight rates between Matane and Mont Joli were brought down to the level of the C.N.R. Since then, the company has been reorganized. It made a few improvements, but I am convinced, as are many others, that because of its set-up it is physically impossible for the management to give the people concerned with this 26-mile stretch the kind of service provided in other parts of the country.

If, after buying this part of the railroad from Mont Joli to Matane, the Canadian National should want to continue to operate this railway, we, the people of Matane, would surely have no objection to their doing so.

I wish to add something to the splendid speech made by my colleague.

(Text):

He has surveyed the situation thoroughly. I am not going to repeat anything that he has said, but if I am not mistaken he may have overlooked two small details which I believe are of paramount importance. One is that I do not see why there should be anything scandalous in an endeavour on the part of the government or the C.N.R. authorities to take over a stretch of line twenty-six miles long, and even extend it to Ste. Anne des Monts, with low revenue from freight rates and a small volume of business for a period of time, when the same thing was done at much greater expense for Churchill. I will not mention of course the great success that my colleague, the hon. member for Chapleau (Mr. Gourd) had in having a line constructed there. I hope it will prove to be an asset. Even if the extension now proposed is not such a great