

Mr. FISHER: From representations I have seen reported in newspapers, I understand that the truckers in Quebec are fairly militant about railway competition.

Mr. BALCER: Yes.

Mr. FISHER: I have also seen representations which were made before Quebec hearings that they felt the extensions of railways in an area such as this are unnecessary because of the service they provide. What study did you make of their position in this matter?

Mr. BALCER: We have had conflicting opinions from the truckers. The association made a statement that was reproduced in the press, but we have also received some representations from truckers in the area to the effect that the long term development benefit of such a railway in the area would certainly justify the building of this railway. They felt that the economic activity that would be created by this branch line would certainly even up any disappointment they might have.

Mr. FISHER: What is the condition of the harbour at Ste. Anne des Monts?

Mr. BALCER: It may need some improvements.

Mr. FISHER: Have you looked into the possibility that Ste. Anne des Monts might be similar to Baie Comeau as a grain shipping port? Would it be ice free all year round?

Mr. BALCER: No.

Mr. KEAYS: There still can be the same boat service operated winter and summer between the north and south shore. The difficulty would be on account of the prevalent winds being from the north; but it is loose ice.

Mr. FISHER: As the member for Gaspé has pointed out, this is a community which is over 300 years old.

Mr. KEAYS: Correction.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Keays is the member for Iles-de-la-Madeleine.

Mr. KEAYS: 427 would be exact.

Mr. FISHER: I am going to optimistic extremes. This is only a very small piece of the loaf. Why not construct the line right through to Gaspé?

Mr. BALCER: Because this line lies right opposite these mineral developments of which we were speaking. There is justification for going that far. If we discover minerals in the same quantity further on, we would certainly look at a proposal for extending the railway. For the present, however, by reaching Ste. Anne des Monts we are just north of the main mineral deposits. From various representations which have been made to us we believe we will be in a position to tap the most important mineral deposits of the Gaspé peninsula.

Mr. FISHER: But you have no indication of any real tonnage, say, in the next five years?

Mr. BALCER: We do not have the precise figures. Before the East Sullivan Mines Limited are ready to go into operation they will have to build their plant. We do not know how much they might ship or what will be the percentage of the ore, and things like that. I am not in a position to say at the present time what the quantity or the content will be.

Mr. FISHER: Since concentrates can be trucked very handily, was any thought given to providing substantial funds for the purpose of putting in a better highway network in the Gaspé rather than build the rail line?

Mr. BALCER: I am not an expert, but experience shows that the movement of bulk cargo is done more cheaply by railroad than by trucking.

Mr. FISHER: Yes, but the mining developments are, by their very nature, risky. We have a fairly large mining field up at Red Lake which is turning