

*National Transportation Policy*

west aboard some nice ones, because the railway company keeps all its best coaches for trips in western Canada.

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** They are comfortable.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Yes, it is true. Indeed, I am quite happy for westerners, but I would hope to find similar conditions in our area. The same thing happens throughout Quebec. It seems as if the CNR is keeping for that province its dirtiest and oldest equipment to disgust its passengers and keep them away.

It is sometimes suggested that the tracks are responsible. Now, this cannot be true, because an engine which can draw freight trains of 150 cars at 40 or 45 miles an hour could easily draw a small passenger train with only 4 or even 5, 6 and 8 cars.

But such is not the case. We leave Montreal at 8 p.m. and after having travelled 250 miles, we reach Chambord between 6.30, 7 or 8 a.m. sometimes at nine o'clock. Why? We must wait and let a freight train pass while the passengers are waiting. That is the new system of the CN's technicians.

• (1750)

I have seen a train on a side-line having to wait almost three hours for a freight. That is very interesting. So interesting in fact that many passengers getting off the train were heard saying: They have had me once but I will never let it happen again. Mr. Speaker, that is not a way of attracting customers and organizing a profit-earning transport service. One feels that the managers would rather stay in their offices in Montreal and carry freight only.

What about maintenance? Formerly, there was one office employee for five railwaymen. Today it is the opposite: for one railwayman there are five office employees doing nothing, lying on their wall-to-wall office carpet. And nobody looks after the railroad. The rate of derailments was the highest ever this winter. Why? Because of the lack of maintenance. The maintenance staff was reduced by two-thirds in our area and the rest of them cannot cope with the work.

On the other hand, the ranks of bureaucrats are swelling.

I have seen three foremen spend two hours watching a workman at his work. Examples as ridiculous as that do exist.

I believe it is about time for the government and the Minister of Transport to assume their responsibilities and require more fair-mindedness from the CN management. Moreover, the next time they ask us to make up their deficit, let us think about it twice before doing something. If we cannot get reasonable service from that Crown corporation which cannot manage to get out of the red and keeps asking the people who receive no service to foot the bill, let us sell it to private enterprise. I believe it will be the best way of giving satisfaction to people in our area as well as the rest of the province of Quebec, because the same critics are being heard on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence. One can be forbearing for some time but there is a limit to everything.

[Mr. Gauthier.]

I am surprised to find that other hon. members keep silent, put up with anything and seem to deem it satisfactory. The situation is worse than ever. If this keeps up within two years nobody will want to board CN trains for they will simply be disgusted. I hope that these remarks will reach the ears of the CN officials.

I would have much more to say, but since my time is limited to ten minutes, I shall conclude my remarks.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order. I wish to remind the hon. member that his time is not limited to ten minutes, but to twenty minutes. Therefore, he still has a few minutes to conclude his remarks.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A while ago I was told that I was not allowed 20 minutes.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order, please. In order to clarify the situation, I might say that since the hon. member is speaking on behalf of his party, the rules allow him twenty minutes.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for bringing this to my attention. Once again, I simply wish to say that if we could blame the government for not voting the necessary credits for track maintenance, we might be inclined to believe that it is too poor to finance the Canadian National Railways. However, such is not the situation now.

During the last year, we have replaced almost all the tracks and so we now have a perfect line. There are still weaknesses in some sectors and I feel that the worst is too big a volume of freight for the present line. Of course, we do not have an intercontinental line, with rails designed to carry the weight of 125 cars loaded with iron ore, copper or wood. A single train of 150 cars is out of question. This explains the many derailments of freight trains this winter, and the situation will remain the same as long as the maintenance personnel is not increased.

**Mr. Blouin:** Mr. Speaker, may I call it six o'clock?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** With the unanimous consent of the House, we can call it six o'clock.

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Since it is six o'clock, I now leave the chair until eight o'clock.

At 5.58 p.m. the House took recess.

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#### AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

**Mr. Gustave Blouin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to say a few words tonight on the opposition motion submitted by the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Thomas).