

*Supply—Transport*

believe the Minister of Transport is in a position to make such a statement right now, tonight, since the matter is urgent, with all the inconvenience we have experienced lately at the Bagotville air terminal. I urge the minister to make a statement on this, in order that the whole population of Saguenay and Lake St. John may know where it stands.

A second problem of local interest relates to the railway connecting Montreal and Quebec City to the Saguenay area and serving the cities of Chicoutimi, Jonquière and Bagotville. Two or three years ago and on several occasions, I asked in the railway committee and in the house, as well as to the Chairman of the C.N.R., Mr. Donald Gordon, that this railway be improved, because it is obsolete today. It is true that at times the train makes 60 miles an hour, but at 20 miles an hour sideways, 20 miles an hour up and down and 20 miles an hour forwards; this means that passengers are thrown sideways, up and down and forward, for a total speed of 60 miles an hour. The speed is greater sideways than forward. The C.N.R. chairman promised to investigate the condition on this railway line. He had even undertaken to make the trip—and some hon. members will remember that in the committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines, the chairman of the C.N.R. had promised to make the trip from Montreal to Jonquière and Chicoutimi, with myself and other members of the area, in order to find out for himself about the standards of the railway between Montreal and the Saguenay-Lake St. John area.

Seven or eight months after the chairman gave this undertaking, about a year ago, I wrote Mr. Gordon again to ask when it would be convenient for him to make the trip in order that the improvements be made. I was told that improvements had been made, that the timetable had been changed to the satisfaction of all concerned. What changes? Stops along the way were eliminated so that, without stops, the train can run more slowly. The bumps are not so noticeable. That was the improvement. Since that time, those who live along the line, who operate hunting or fishing clubs where the train used to stop, every little village where the train no longer stops are complaining. And do you know what the C.N.R. tells them? Do you know what the C.N.R. employees say when people from the ridings of Chicoutimi, Lapointe, Roberval, Lake St. John write to complain about the discontinuance of the stops of the C.N.R. train along this line? They say: The member for Lapointe asked for it.

[Mr. Grégoire.]

If the President of the C.N.R., who eliminated those stops to improve traffic, tries to justify his action by saying that the member for Lapointe asked for it, I say to him that never in my life did I ask that those stops be eliminated.

• (9:30 p.m.)

I wonder whether the minister asked for that. I certainly did not.

Why are some people defending themselves by putting the responsibility on the member for Lapointe as far as the decisions taken by the officials are concerned, when he said decisions are far from adequate?

Who ever heard of improving a line by eliminating stops in order to have the train go slower, so that passengers will not feel the bumps?

Mr. Chairman, I ask the Minister of Transport whether this is progress under the present government? This means: Slow down and you will not feel the bumps in the middle of the road so much. If there are complaints, blame the opposition members. What we are asking for is the improvement of the track and not the elimination of stops.

I take this opportunity to ask the Minister of Transport to insist that the improvement to be done does not consist only in having the trains go slower. This is not an improvement. You must start perhaps by making the wheels round and repairing the tracks so as to allow the train to go at high speed. At this time, the trip between Montreal and Chicoutimi is nonsensical and I believe it should be improved.

Another point of local interest: I think it would be time in 1966 to ask the Minister of Transport to put an icebreaker on the Saguenay to allow winter navigation on that river. That would be to the greatest advantage of industry and trade in the Saguenay-Lake St. John region. There are, for instance, great industries such as the aluminum company, 85 to 90 per cent of its production is exported, mostly by sea, that is by the Saguenay river. In winter, that shipping route is blocked and it is necessary to use storage facilities or other routes. This increases costs and our aluminum industry is no longer able to meet the prices asked by industries in other countries.

Winter shipping on the Saguenay would not cost that much. It would benefit designated areas such as the Saguenay-Lake St. John area. An icebreaker would be needed in the winter to keep the channel open the year round on the Saguenay river. That would