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Hon. R. B. Hanson Urges Needs Of P. E. Island Winter Ferry Service

Following is the text of the discussion in the House of Commons, March 30, on the Borden Tormentine car ferry service:

Department of Transport

Marine service—

448. Marine service steamers, including ice-breakers—maintenance, operation and repair — further amount required, $24,000.

Hon. R. B. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Will the minister state how many icebreakers the government owns, operates and maintains and where they are operated?

Hon. J. E. MICHAUD (Minister of Transport): There are five icebreakers. All operate in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the Atlantic —Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and some other points in the Atlantic, during the war.

Mr. HANSON: What icebreaker is operating on the New Brunswick coast this year?

Mr. MICHAUD: Of course, there was the car ferry from the mainland. Then for a while, early in the winter, there was the old Lady Grey and the Saurel between New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Cape Breton.

Mr. HANSON: During a recent period there has been a great deal of interruption of the car ferry service between the mainland and the Island, but no icebreaker was available. Yet I am told that we have five in operation, and certainly those out of Sorel could not have been operating very much. Why was there a lack of foresight in not having an icebreaker available to keep the Northumberland strait clear, having regard to the —shall I say — ineffectiveness of the old car ferry to maintain the service? The state of communications between the mainland and Prince Edward Island is little better than a scandal, having regard to the obligation of Canada to the island. I know the difficulties very well, and I am going to refer to them a little later, when another item is up, but at the moment I want to confine my questioning of the Minister to the failure of his department to provide an icebreaker as an all-time supplement to the Prince Edward Island car ferry.

Icebreaker Needed

During the months of January, February and March not a single icebreaker has been available for that service; yet there was an icebreaker at Quebec, where she must have been doing nothing or next to nothing. The only service I have heard of that is being performed is the rescue of the lives of the three Quebec Airways men, which of course was most commendable, and from that point of view it was very fortunate that she was available. But we have at least two big icebreakers with headquarters in the lower St. Lawrence or in the vicinity of Quebec and after navigation closes they cannot have anything to do for months.

My complaint against the minister's department is that one of these icebreakers should have been kept available in the Northumberland strait to take care of the greatly increased heavy traffic or to keep open the channels for the greatly increased heavy traffic which has developed. Unless relief comes very soon there will be an enormous loss to the shippers of Prince Edward Island and there will be great difficulty in obtaining transit of the large numbers of cars of fertilizer which have arrived at Tormentine for transmission across the strait. I think the service has not been good enough, and I suggest that it could have been greatly improved if the minister had had foresight enough to have had in Northumberland strait during this season one of those big icebreakers which have probably been tied up at the wharf at Quebec or Sorel for the last several weeks.

Mr. MICHAUD: Evidently the hon. member is misinformed, because there is no icebreaker at Sorel.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Well, where are they?

Mr. MICHAUD: There is an icebreaker called the Saurel which was and is almost always in the winter time in the gulf of St. Lawrence.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I misunderstood the minister. Where was she.

Mr. MICHAUD: She was working between Halifax, Sydney and Newfoundland, and she left Newfoundland to come to the rescue of the three men who were saved last week in the gulf of St. Lawrence. There are no icebreakers tied up at any wharf, whether at Quebec or at any other place, during the winter.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Was she breaking ice in Halifax harbour, or outside Halifax, or between Halifax and Sydney?

Mr. MICHAUD: Between Halifax Canso, Sydney and Newfoundland, and late in the fall, between Prince Edward Island, Pictou and the Magdalen islands. But during the months of January and February that icebreaker was detailed to do some special work in the gulf of St. Lawrence towards Newfoundland.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is one out of five. Where are the rest of them?

St. Lawrence Service

Mr. MICHAUD: Two were employed as usual, breaking a channel from Quebec to Montreal.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): In the winter time?

Mr. MICHAUD: In the winter time. That has been done for years and it is a necessity.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I have no doubt it has been done for years but why the necessity? There is no winter shipping into Montreal.

Mr. MICHAUD: Oh, no, but there would be floods in the spring all along the banks of the St. Lawrence, and especially around the island of Montreal, if that work were not done in the winter time.

The other icebreaker was recalled from Cape Breton to help in certain war work in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

My hon. friend says that there was negligence or lack of foresight on the part of the department in not bringing a powerful icebreaker to the rescue of the Prince Edward Island. I must inform him that early in the winter, when the Prince Edward Island began to have difficulties in crossing, suggestions were made to the engineers and officials of the department to bring an icebreaker to break the channel to help her.

I was informed by officers of the department in whom I have full confidence that the Prince Edward Island was just as powerful an icebreaker as there was in the government service, and second, that the bringing of another one into that area would be simply a nuisance to her and would not help a bit in clearing the channel. For that reason, no other icebreaker was taken into that area, and this was confirmed, I am told, by the captain of the Prince Edward Island, who did not want to be bothered by having another icebreaker in his way.

Severe Winter

I agree that this has been a very severe winter, owing to ice conditions and adverse winds, which kept the channel practically full of ice, so that on many days the service was interrupted. There were very few days on which there were no crossings; on many days there were a few crossings, and it took all the power of the boat to wade her way through the ice, so that hardly any load of freight could be taken off.

This is a situation over which we have no control. Every consideration was given to cope with it, and officers of the department, who have been in the service for many years, engineers, marine agents, ship captains, were all consulted and all gave the same opinion.

The situation with regard to the ferry between New Brunswick on the mainland and the Island since last Saturday up to yesterday had fortunately improved greatly, and on three days during this week the ferry took an average of 100 cars each way every day.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Well, spring is here.

Mr. MICHAUD: But it was not spring there yesterday, unfortunately, if the hon. member wants to know. However, I hope that next week the situation will have cleared sufficiently to enable the car ferry to take its full quota of freight cars on each trip and carry on its average of from ten to fourteen trips a day, thus relieving the congestion of traffic on either side of the channel.

Seed Shipments

Mr. GRAYDON: My information last week, when I raised the question on the orders of the day, was that there were between 500 and 1,000 cars of farm products, to a large extent potatoes for seed for other parts of Canada. Could the minister indicate what the present position is in regard to the congestion? How many cars are waiting at Borden for shipment to Tormentine and vice versa?

Mr. MICHAUD: My hon. friend is slightly off in his estimate of the cars that were waiting for shipment to either side.

Mr. GRAYDON: I believe it was Premier Jones of Prince Edward Island who gave the figures, though I am not sure.

Mr. MICHAUD: On one day about two weeks ago there were 565 cars awaiting shipment to the Island from the mainland, but they were cars of material which had not first or second priority for transshipment. During the winter provisions and coal got first priority to the Island, and coming this way potatoes and agricultural products of all kinds had priority.

I have the record for practically every day of the last two months. Of course, there may be 6,000 or 7,000 cars of goods on the Island not loaded. There might be a quantity sufficient to make up 6,000 or 7,000 cars; but as far as the records show, on March 27, three days ago, there were awaiting shipment at Borden six cars and no empties, and at Tormentine there were 182 loads ready to be taken over. At one time two weeks ago there were 565 carloads of goods waiting for shipment to the Island, and that number was reduced to 182.

Mr. GRAYDON: That would be natural. If such a large number of cars were waiting to go over to the island, there would not be such a large number waiting on the island because they could not have crossed to get their load.

Empty Cars

Mr. MICHAUD: But the record shows that for days prior to the 27th the Canadian National Railways carried over empty cars which enabled them to cross over many more times than had the cars been full of merchandise, because the load was less on the boat, and this helped the farmers of the Island to move their goods. For the last ten days the average of empty cars taken over was fifty a day, but for three days there were 100 cars each day taken over and for three days 100 cars each day taken back. I admit that if there had been more cars over and greater facilities, if all the cars which are loaded for transhipment had been taken over before the 27th, it would have greatly relieved the situation on the island.

Mr. GRAYDON: Whoever is responsible, I think it is generally recognized by those of us who do not come from that part of Canada, that the situation is at best terrible so far as the Island is concerned. Anyone who goes there recognizes at once that the place is insular not only from the point of view of geography but from the point of view of Confederation itself, and something will have to be done pretty soon, having in mind what the Premier himself says. When the Premier of a province starts talking about damages which that island could claim against confederated Canada the situation must be pretty serious, and I think the minister must have been well apprised of that.

Mr. MICHAUD: I have been apprised of the situation.

Cites Premier Jones

Mr. HANSON: I am sorry I have not with me at the moment the language used by Premier Jones of Prince Edward Island. Everything I have said relative to this service would be trite in comparison with what he has said about it, and I have no doubt the minister fully understands his language. The trouble, however, is that they did not do very much about it; they waited for nature to take care of the situation. What the minister told me about the icebreaker was just that he allowed his own judgment and that of his officials to be overruled by the master of the Prince Edward Island and the other engineer. The minister's own instincts were good, but he did not follow them up.

They never tried the experiment of having the Saurel or some other icebreaker in there. That is the fault I find with the minister. They allowed the condition to remain and did not even experiment in trying to break up this ice in the winter months. Therefore I think the minister is reprehensible for not having tried to carry out his own suggestion. I suggest that the Prince Edward Island is an old ship. How many times has she broken down this winter? How many days' delay has been due to break-downs in the mechanism of the ship herself? If the minister has the record with him I think it will show that a good many trips were lost because of break-downs in the mechanism of this old ferry which is now in use.

I suggest to the minister that he has failed in his duty in not making an attempt that he himself thought was the right thing to do. Therefore I say he deserves the censure of this committee.

(To Be Continued)

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Twenty-One New Penicillin Plants Soon To Operate

CLEVELAND, April 7—(AP)—Twenty-one new penicillin manufacturing plants in the United States and Canada, costing $30,000,000, soon will be making nine pounds of pure penicillin a month, enough perhaps for the military forces, but not enough for a date to be set when this life-saving drug can be given to the public without restriction.

The penicillin developments were reported to the American chemical society today by Dr. Robert D. Coghill, of the United States department of agriculture at Peoria, Ill., where much of the penicillin work has been done.

The nine pounds will treat only 250,000 cases of severe illness, but will do for 2,500,000 cases of gonorrhea or other comparatively mild infections—mild, that is, when penicillin is the remedy.

The cost of making penicillin has dropped 84 per cent in the last year, so that the dosage for a severe illness costs about $35; and for gonorrhea $5.

"However," said Dr. Coghill, "the price will undoubtedly go much lower, and penicillin will be within reach of everybody."

He named the diseases for which penicillin is good and all but one are the same as those where sulfa drugs are good. The exception is syphilis which Dr. Coghill put in the "possible" class.

There now are three methods of growing penicillin where there was only one a year ago. By one of these it can be grown in vats instead of bottles. Nevertheless, Dr. Coghill said, only nine pounds a month from $30,000,000 worth of plants is "utterly fantastic." Methods of producing it faster are not now in sight, but are expected.

Penicillin production today is enough for 40,000 severe cases a month. A year ago it was only enough for 400.

MAY BE TOP U. S. ACE

A U.S. FIGHTER BASE IN ENGLAND, April 7—(AP)—Capt Don S. Gentile, 23-year-old fighter pilot from Piqua, O., today claimed 27 enemy planes destroyed, of which at least eight were on the ground, and if his claim is allowed he will take undisputed leadership among American aces in the European theatre of operations.

Twenty-Four Hour Leave

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CHAPTER IV

They found a telephone and Simon, after what seemed an eternity, got through to the apartment. Cherry watched his face while he was speaking to Connie, heard the hopeless note in his voice, saw his expression as he replaced the receiver.

"No news?"

"None."

"Perhaps she hasn't got there yet."

"But if she'd been all right, she would have telephoned. It would be the first thing she would do."

About this Cherry didn't feel so certain. And yet, if Denise were all right, even though she were leaving Simon, she would surely have let them know that she was alive and no harm had come to her.

They searched now among the injured. Some had already been taken to the hospital. But Denise was not among them. They drove back again to the scene of the accident. They put further questions. A quiet-voiced official told them that only three women and five men remained unidentified.

Simon turned to her. "You mustn't come in here, my dear."

She met his eyes. She wasn't going to desert him. "I'm all right, Simon."

The bodies were charred almost beyond recognition, one far worse than the other two. Neither of the other two was Denise. But the third . . .

"This case we think belonged to her, sir. One of the other passengers who escaped said it was in the rack above her head." The case was Denise's. It was blackened and charred, but her initials were still faintly visible. Cherry opened it and found her things, her gold-topped glass bottles and jars.

The sheet was still withdrawn from the body. A hand hung limply —the left hand and on the third finger was a thin platinum wedding ring and another ring with an enormous solitaire diamond set around with tiny emeralds. It was an unusual ring. Cherry had seen it often before. The first time had been when Denise had shown it to her on the evening she'd announced her engagement. "It cost a fortune, but it's lovely, don't you think, Cherry?" It shone now in the late evening sunlight that came in a vivid shaft through the open doorway.

Cherry turned and left the waiting room. She wondered if Jerry Miller were also in that ghastly waiting room. She supposed she didn't care. But for him none of this would matter.

She waited outside and a moment later Simon joined her. "Go back to the car, will you? I just want a word with one of those officials."

It was then that she remembered something. Denise had had other cases with her. She had been leaving home for good. Cherry's heart shook. If they were found, it could so easily be discovered to whom they belonged. And if this happened what would Simon think?

She looked swiftly round and saw a weary, hollow-eyed porter coming toward her. "The luggage? What happened to it?" She asked desperately, praying that Simon wouldn't join her until the man could give her an answer.

"Luggage?" He looked at her stupidly for a moment as if hardly understanding her. And then, 'Every bit of it was burnt. Not a scrap left. But luggage doesn't matter."

It didn't of course, not compared with human life. And to Cherry this news was salvation. She turned as she saw Simon walking blindly toward her. She took his arm and led him back to the car. She said firmly, "I'm driving back. Yes, I am. Please, Simon, don't argue."

As they neared the outskirts he spoke for the first time. "I can't bear the apartment, Cherry."

"I wasn't going to take you there. Shall I drive you to your club?"

"Please." Then, with an effort. "But what about you? Cherry, forgive me, I've just not been thinking."

"I'm all right. I've got twenty-four hours' leave. I'm not due back at the station till two-thirty tomorrow."

She drew into the curb outside his club some little while later. She longed to say something to ease his suffering, but she knew that no words of hers could help him. She thought almost with relief. At least he doesn't know the truth, and knew that at all costs she was going to keep it from him. He could always believe Denise had been on the way to meet him.

He stood at the car looking down at her. The street was deserted. It was late now and dusk was falling. The barrage balloons were like grey globules in the darking sky. Simon said simply, "I'd never have got through this without you."

Her heart went out to him. "You'll let me see you sometimes? I'll do all I can. There'll be things to arrange. I don't get a lot of spare time, but I may be of some help."

"You're sweet, Cherry Pie." His voice shook, "You and I— we both loved her so much. I..." he couldn't go on. Without another word he turned and walked like a blind man up the steps to the club. The next moment Cherry saw the door swing behind him.

Months passed, The Battle of Britain was fought and won. Cherry's airdrome was blitzed, but somehow she and all of them came through it. It was hell while it lasted. Then day blitzes gave way to night. It was agony not knowing what had happened to one's friends in the bombarded cities.

Cherry worried about Simon, who was working in London. Her own airdrome, some little distance out of town, though a military objective, knew comparative quiet. Always now when she had leave she saw Simon. He turned to her after that tragic afternoon, grateful for the friendship she offered him. It had been Cherry who, the following morning, before she returned to her duties, arranged everything with Connie. It had been Cherry who superintended the packing of such clothes and personal belongings as Denise had left behind. It had been Cherry who saw the agents about subletting the apartment and storing the furniture. It had been Cherry, Simon said many times, who had helped him retain his sanity. Without her, God alone knew what might have happened.

(To Be Continued)

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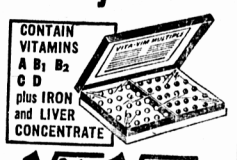

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