

roads are concerned, we must spend at least \$1 million a year in future, no matter what government we have. If that is wasting time, then I don't know what I am here in this Convention for. Is it wasting time to try and get a picture of what these activities will cost us? If it is wasting time, will some radio commentator tell me just what this Convention is for? Will some of the critics tell me just what is the function of the National Convention?

We are not great statesmen, we have not had the advantage of having been trained in the Fiji Islands, or to be the products of the Colonial service: we are just ordinary Newfoundlanders sent in here to examine the various departments of government — what they have spent in the past, and what they are liable to spend in the future. That is what we are trying to do.

**Mr. Ashbourne** I am of the opinion, that possibly only within the last few days, since this debate has gone over the air, that in certain isolated parts of Newfoundland has it been known that the government has this plan as regards local roads. If that is not so, how can we explain the small expenditure which has been made up to the present time?....

**Mr. Harrington** Mr. Chairman, before this section of the Transportation and Communications Committee's report — the Railway section — is left by the Convention, I'd like to make one or two comments on it that appear not to have been considered by the Committee. Perhaps they did not feel it came within their province — perhaps they did not think of it — I shouldn't wonder at that, considering the vast amount of data they gathered and had to try and assimilate. The point I mention arises from a statement of the General Manager of the Railway contained on page 6: "The General Manager states that the main line needs rerailing, that seven new locomotives, and some new rolling stock must soon be purchased. These expenditures, which cannot it seems, long be delayed, will run up into millions of dollars."

The Newfoundland Railway in recent years has come in for a great deal of criticism, some of it deserved, a lot of it unthinking, a great deal of it unjustifiable. To my mind, the history of railroading in this country, the story of the railway is on the whole an epic of great triumph. The building, maintenance and operation of our cross-country line has been put by some observers on

a par with similar trans-continental operations in the United States and Canada. This criticism is not, however, without reason. For the fact remains that it still takes an express train over a day to cover 546 miles from eastern to western terminus. A person who flies from New York or Montreal to Gander in a few hours, takes perhaps 12 to 16 hours to reach St. John's by rail, and so on. I know that trains will never be able to travel as fast as aeroplanes, but they can travel as fast as automobiles, at least they do in other countries. I am quite aware too, that in other countries, there are trains a lot slower and a lot worse-appointed than our trains — but again I am not making comparisons. I am merely saying these few things as a lead-up to a question that has always bothered me whenever the Newfoundland Railway is on the carpet, namely this business of the narrow gauge. For that, it appears to me, is the chief drawback of our railway system.

In previous debates on other matters, some delegates have asked in jocose mood or otherwise, why we persist in believing that we are right and the rest of the world is wrong on certain questions. I make the same observation on the matter of our railway and its narrow gauge. In debating this report yesterday, almost every delegate made the observation that he was not a railroad man, as though to apologise for his remarks if they should prove to be stupid, irrelevant or anything else. I make no apology in referring to the narrow gauge road that traverses this country, since it is the greatest drawback not only to the efficient, but also to the profitable operation of this vital public utility. The standard gauge railroad, 4 feet, 8½ inches, is in use in the United States, Canada, Mexico, England, the continent of Europe, and Australia, amongst other countries. In Europe, it is true, as well as in other countries, there are considerable mileages of smaller gauge, especially in mountainous districts, such as Switzerland and parts of Germany. But the main trunk lines, if not exactly 4 feet 8½ inches, are so close to that gauge as to permit the through running of locomotives and rolling stock. Thus by means of train ferry steamers, which carry locomotives and rolling stock on their decks, it is possible for British rolling stock to cross the continent on the Harwich to Zeebrugge train ferry, traverse all central Europe, and by means of similar steamers, reach Scan-