

involved in making decisions for Air Canada, building hangars for the corporation and paying for them out of the public treasury, so he is considerably involved in the affairs of Air Canada, together with the Prime Minister, and I trust he will enlighten us tonight as to precisely what the situation is.

Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned this evening, we are debating a motion which I believe is one of the understatements of the year—

That in the opinion of this House the government's transportation policies have failed to encourage the growth of strong regional economies, and, in particular, this House condemns the Minister of Transport's Atlantic provinces transportation policy and continues to reject his attitude towards western transportation problems.

As I enter this discussion on transportation policy I cannot but think of the words used by the writer of a book entitled "Canada—A Story of Challenge." This historian, describing the nature of Canada and the way in which its geography tends to have a profound impact on the social and economic fabric of the nation, wrote:

Barriers such as the mountains and the shield exact a heavy price in scattering the population. They make for sectional divisions and high transportation charges. They weaken national unity and retard national development.

Four indictments are levelled in this quotation. First, these barriers make for sectional divisions; second, they weaken national unity; third, they retard national development; and fourth, they make for high transportation charges.

It is true that in western Canada unfair and discriminatory freight rates have contributed more to western alienation and a decline in national unity than even the questions of language and culture. However, I would not attribute these unfortunate effects to the physical factors maintained by the author of the book to which I referred. Rather, I attribute them to the policies, or lack of policies, enunciated and implemented by Liberal governments in past years. In the area of transport we have shuffled from one transportation mess, to use the words of a former minister, to another, and if political prophets are correct in their predictions we shall soon see the demise of yet another minister and the installation of a successor.

Even at this point there appears to be uncertainty regarding the implementation of a comprehensive national transportation policy. The rail system is important not only for the prairie region but for all Canada since the quality of the facilities put in place primarily for the prairie provinces have a very great effect upon the economy of British Columbia and, indeed, upon that of the whole nation. The failure to maintain an adequate standard of trackage across Canada, the failure to maintain adequate rolling stock, the failure of the companies to update their facilities, the decision to make huge investments in enterprises which have little or nothing to do with transport are a matter of great concern to those whose livelihood depends to a great extent on the movement of products to and from the areas in which they live.

My comments this evening will relate chiefly to my own province of British Columbia, and in particular to the agricultural sector. Although arable land in the province is extremely limited, my riding is one of the most important agricultural

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areas and I wish to relate my remarks to the motion as it affects conditions there. As a background to what I have to say I should like to indicate the extent and value of the livestock and poultry sectors of the agricultural industry in British Columbia. Farm cash receipts are as follows: cattle, \$66,696,000; calves, \$6,055,000; hogs, \$11,599,000; sheep and lambs, \$789,000; dairy products, \$103,157,000; poultry, \$36,969,000; eggs, \$34,496,000; other livestock, \$9,107,000.

● (2110)

This indicates the extent of the livestock industry in my province and emphasizes the importance of the feed grain situation in the province of British Columbia. I do not have the figures for 1976 here, but I have figures up to 1975. An analysis of the last three crop years shows that the feeding areas of the province, other than the Peace River district, consume about 480,000 tons of feed grains per year, of which 9 per cent is locally grown, 10 per cent is terminal elevator screenings, and 81 per cent is prairie grains and millfeeds of American corn.

Because of various situations which have developed, one being the matter of transportation, the increase of the importation of American corn is very, very clearly outlined. For instance in 1972 there were 14,400 tons imported, and in 1975 there were 73,600 tons imported. The increasing use of American corn is the result of a number of factors—the cost factor, transportation costs, and interruptions in transportation through strikes and other situations which are forcing people in British Columbia to depend more and more upon imports from the United States.

The industry was incensed when the government announced a reduction of \$4 per ton on feed freight assistance to British Columbia. We appreciate the fact that this was restored when it was pointed out by the industry, the British Columbia Federation of Agriculture, the provincial government, members of parliament and others, that the basis upon which this decision was made was actually a false one. This was particularly important to the Fraser Valley, for 80 per cent of the subsidized grain was used mainly in the lower mainland of the province and in the poultry and dairy industries. I am indicating this to show the importance of adequate transportation as far as the agricultural economy of British Columbia is concerned.

I am stressing the input problems which are being faced by agricultural producers, rather than the marketing of their product. However, there are a great many problems which are militating against the development and maintenance of a viable agricultural economy in the province of British Columbia. I mentioned first the lower priority which is assigned to the feed grain industry. We all recognize the importance of our export industry, but we have to consider that producers in Canada are battling in order to develop an industry and to maintain an industry without which the nation would be very much the poorer. So, we think of the lower priority assigned the feed grain industry; the lower priority which is recognized by transportation companies in providing