

Transportation

become economically, commercially and industrially competitive. It is an absolute necessity. To accept a cut-back of services is too risky and too costly. We would be shortchanging ourselves by being complacently understanding and showing good faith.

So the government must take position: either it will continue to tolerate or encourage abandonment, and the recent urbanization statistics clearly prove it, or it will reduce distances through a subsidized and appropriate public communication system and through a transportation policy that will give to our regions the economic stimulus they absolutely require.

As concerns the companies presently involved in rail transportation we also recognize their problems but we cannot accept that they share those profitability problems with municipalities for instance or private organizations. Here are two examples of that exploitation of municipalities and private organizations.

The companies require from municipalities a contribution to build access roads to some grade crossings. The contribution to the works themselves seems acceptable to me but the participation in maintenance costs is totally unacceptable. In my opinion, it is a cost transfer imposed upon a municipality which has no justification.

The Canadian Pacific wants to force snowmobile associations to reimburse expenses for the maintenance of railroad crossings used by snowmobiles. That is another example of the cost transfer unfairly imposed upon a group which has neither the will nor the financial means to take it. Is that supposed to mean that railways are going to become a nuisance rather than a service in addition to others in regions such as ours?

Here is a list of questions which arise from the present situation. Are railway companies going to keep on persecuting poor people? Do they intend to reduce their services to the point where nobody will be interested in using them anymore? As companies contributed at a certain time to create subdivisions, do they contribute today to their isolation or even their disappearance? Or else, are the Canadian Transport Commission and the government prepared to introduce an over-all policy on transportation which would aim at saving peripheral regions from disappearance and would allow each citizen to adjust with full knowledge of the facts?

In short, we do not and we will not accept any decrease in services and we demand that an over-all policy on transportation be established.

Mr. Speaker, I am inspired in my action by fear and fear, as they say, is the beginning of wisdom.

There is an attempt to convince us with arguments which seem logical but in fact one thing only is accomplished and it is to make us more vulnerable by destroying us through our own co-operation for in the last resort we will have no other choice than folding out.

[Mr. Tessier.]

We know that the government has recommended to the Canadian Transport Commission that passenger trains serving scarcely populated areas be replaced by buses so as to eliminate the need for federal subsidies. Yet at the same time, the railways increase their rates beyond the means of present and future train users.

This policy of "user pay" is detrimental to areas such as mine and Bill C-233, by limiting further service reduction and price increases, would contribute to a fair treatment policy for all regions.

Furthermore, this bill would give us an assurance against the great schemers who are constantly alienating us and persecuting us with economic arguments.

Mr. Speaker, may I ask that if these brilliant economists do not succeed in their great urban designs, that they at least do not come to pollute our countryside with their theories, least of all make us pay for them.

I wish our Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) were the best minister ever in his field but he will certainly not be so by saving on the backs of those who are economically speaking the weakest in our society and he will indeed be recognized as our best minister ever, when his transportation policy will enable the population to continue dwelling on this land by facing fair and reasonable costs and will transform our regions into economic areas where it will be possible to work and produce goods at competitive prices in order for them to stay on the market.

That is one of the objectives of a rational transportation policy to be established before we are asked to put up with reduced services and higher costs.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, it is worth mentioning that the transportation policy we are calling for would not only apply to trains but should also study all the transportation methods and put forth solutions which would take into account the particular needs of remote areas.

● (1722)

[English]

Mr. Hugh A. Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I understand the purpose of this bill is to ensure that transportation improvements in the metropolitan regions of Canada are not carried out at the expense of the rest of the country. May I sincerely say "Amen" to the hon. member's explanatory note.

In my own area I have a great interest in what has happened over the last few years regarding the Esquimalt-Nanaimo Railroad, which is the only railroad on Vancouver Island. It may be interesting for members to note that we also have a narrow gauge highway as our only means of communication on the east side of Vancouver Island. The Esquimalt-Nanaimo Railroad which was taken over by the CPR in 1912 has, for the last number of years, been trying to do two things. First of all it tried to cut off passenger service entirely, and secondly to