

*The Address—Mr. Barnett*

levying side wharfage fees. It reached the point where the minister who is now president of the Canadian Transport Commission appointed an officer of the Department of Transport, Dr. Tom How, to inquire into the situation. He filed an extensive report, with recommendations on this subject, in the fall of 1967.

As I travelled through my constituency during the concerned, a review of the situation on the coast of British Columbia shows that nothing has been done. The situation has steadily deteriorated and the administrative people in the area have an impossible and frustrating task upon their hands. I raised this question with the Minister of Transport when he assumed the portfolio. I raised it in a way which would indicate that I was prepared to give him some time to look into the situation, as indeed I did when the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer) held that portfolio. I suggest that the time has long passed when one can allow the government to hide behind the excuse of frequent changes in ministers of transport.

There have been recent announcements about a new national harbours arrangement and authority. I am not decrying the importance of that move or the need for restructuring the management of our major harbours, but I suggest it is not good enough to have the whole question of a proper administrative arrangement for smaller harbours, which are important to the local commercial traffic up and down our coasts, left on ice. The Minister of Transport months ago said he would ask his colleagues the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) to look into possible changes in the administrative arrangement. From that time until now, neither the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Fisheries nor the Minister of Public Works has said one word in this House about what they intend to do, if anything.

As I travelled through my constituency during the summer recess I saw that the situation had become a festering sore. It is creating much doubt about the administrative capability of this government. I think the time has come when we should have from the Minister of Transport, on whose shoulders the responsibility rests, a statement regarding a definite plan or proposal to be put before this House for our assessment and examination. We should know whether the government is going to accept any or all of the recommendations made in the How report. We should know, after the review of this report—which presumably has been studied by the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Fisheries—whether the government has any useful idea as to how small harbours could be better administered. Let us not play around with this subject any longer.

In my area the commercial fishermen, the towboat operators, the commercial users and all those interested in having facilities for mooring pleasure craft are concerned. This is not only a very important matter because of the industrial and commercial activity that is going on, but it involves thousands of pleasure craft which are using the coastal waters of British Columbia.

When we had before us the new transport act, the government announced a general policy that the users of facilities should pay at least part of the cost of providing

those facilities. I refer to transportation terminals for travellers by air and by water. That policy was adopted and settled in this House. At that time I believed, and still do, that it was the logical approach to take.

● (3:30 p.m.)

The commercial fishermen of B.C. have now, almost to a man, come to accept the concept of paying a reasonable annual fee for the use of public harbour and other facilities along the coast of British Columbia. But they want to know what the situation is. On the surface, I think the proposal of the Minister of Transport to unload some harbours on the Minister of Public Works and some on the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry can only bring about confusion, lack of co-ordination, overduplication in the case of some harbour facilities and unnecessary restriction in the use of others.

If any one of those ministers can put forward a logical argument as to why this kind of arrangement might be suitable, I for one would like to hear them in order to assess and consider the arrangement on its merits. My constituents and I are no longer content—indeed, for a long time we have not been content—with a situation about which month after month, year after year nothing is done.

I wish one other adviser to His Excellency were here at the moment. I refer to the man who recently accepted responsibility for the administration of postal affairs. I want him to reconsider the position taken by the erstwhile Postmaster General and the discriminatory policy of not extending postal services to communities which are entitled by law and under the regulations to have them. There is at least one such community in my constituency, namely, the city of Courtenay, which should have had these services over two years ago. The last time I raised this question there were, I think, at least 30 other communities in Canada in exactly the same boat.

The Postmaster General was hiding behind the excuse that this policy was instituted as a result of the government's restrictions on spending. When are these unfair restrictions on spending to be lifted? When will this government cease to discriminate against the citizens of some communities in Canada because its policies have resulted in a lack of adequate funds with which to administer the necessary services of departments of government?

I know that the genial Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, if he were to answer me, would probably off-the-cuff and in the pleasant way he has put forward a plausible argument as to why his colleagues the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance were justified in imposing this kind of restriction. This situation has existed for quite a long time. The government has had a chance to adjust the policies which it considered necessary and brought about with the meat-axe technique, as I have described it, in slashing expenditures.

Now is the time when at least we should know how much longer this kind of restriction on the extension of normal and essential services to communities will be

[Mr. Barnett.]