

The Address—Mr. MacKay

that matter is not, in those precise terms, under consideration.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

CONTINUATION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed, from Thursday, October 3, consideration of the motion of Mr. Louis Duclos for an address to His Excellency the Administrator of the Government of Canada in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Stanfield (p. 42).

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, my first words are directed to you. I thank you for the consideration you have shown us so far, express my personal confidence in your ability, integrity and fairness, and look forward, as I am sure other hon. members do, to your presiding over this thirtieth parliament. May I also say, for the record, that it is always pleasant to see former colleagues returned to this chamber and to meet new members. I note particularly that all those who came to this chamber after the by-elections of 1971 have been returned. Perhaps now that we have been involved in three elections in a little over three years, we can settle down and concentrate on our parliamentary duties, secure in our new and longer tenure of office.

Before dealing with transportation, may I congratulate the Minister of State (Mr. LeBlanc) responsible for fisheries on his new appointment. We in Atlantic Canada recognize the importance of his portfolio, which will place great strain upon him. If he does not produce results, if conditions do not improve for the fishing industry in Atlantic Canada, he will run into difficulty in four years or whenever the next election is called. As time goes by, I hope his ministry will gain more status. It should not be subordinate to or associated with any other ministry. At present it is connected closely with the Department of the Environment. In some ways that may be desirable. Still, let us keep in mind the importance of our marine resources. This is why I suggest that the status of the minister's portfolio should be upgraded and I hope it will be.

May I say a word about regional economic development, a subject which has interested me since I was first elected. I hope the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson) will initiate programs, perhaps in conjunction with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) or the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie), for developing further the coal industry of eastern Canada. Such development is necessary, keeping in mind the increased price of fuels, including fossil fuel, in this country. The minister might consider what has happened to Devco. Let him take advantage of the expertise of this Crown corporation, learn from its mistakes and apply his knowledge to other parts of eastern Canada.

This country is blessed with great resources and a variety of talent. We have our folk heroes, entertainers and other performers. Sometimes I think we could include the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) in their number. Recently, I understand, he saw himself portrayed in a play

[Mr. Andras.]

which depicted many of the things which happened to him before he was elected to this House. When I think of the minister I think of another great Canadian performer, Gordon Lightfoot, who sings a popular song which may have been dedicated to the minister. It is entitled "The Canadian Railroad Trilogy" and begins something like this, "There was a time in this great land when the railroads did not run." In recent times it has been my impression that history is repeating itself. The Minister of Transport spoke extensively in this debate about the railways. I am glad that for the moment he does not want to create a corporation which will take over rail passenger transportation in this country. He wants to give the railways a chance to co-operate with the government and address themselves to the difficult problem of passenger transportation. I commend the minister on that position and wish him well.

It is incumbent upon the minister, in working out any new policy affecting transportation, to establish guidelines which will affect the Canadian Transport Commission and its influence on the minister in the discharge of his responsibilities. The minister has said he will be bringing forward new legislation in this field. I welcome this, but I think it is worth reminding hon. members of the House that this is not the first time a minister of transport has made a specific commitment to change the legislative intent and effect of transportation in this country. I refer to page 808 of *Hansard* for March 14, 1972, when the then minister of transport said:

● (1220)

I agree with the claim that a reorganized structure is necessary in order that member and the country generally can obtain more information, and obtain it more easily, about all aspects of transportation.

That passage has a familiar ring.

With this objective in mind, I propose to bring before the House in the next session three important pieces of legislation on which work is proceeding at the present time. The first of those is a bill designed to reconstitute Air Canada as a separate Crown corporation, thus divorcing it, as it were, from the CNR. I will also introduce a Canadian National Railways revision act and a companion piece of legislation covering amendments to the Railway Act. Hon. members will know how involved and far reaching these changes are; they have been asking for them for the last two or three years.

When one considers the record in this respect it tends to make one a little cynical. I hope the present Minister of Transport will now address himself to the need which has been expressed in this chamber so many times by so many members.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: I also hope—this is very timely in view of questions asked this morning—that the minister will do something else that has been urged by many members, particularly by the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), that is, set up a truly independent accident investigation body which will clear the air for all time of the well-founded suspicion that sometimes the Department of Transport is investigating itself. This type of thinking should be done away with and such a commission of investigation established.

Yesterday the Minister of Transport was so well informed and clairvoyant that he was able to say, even