

Maritime Transport

in clearing up the mess that already exists. During the last three years no very exciting proposals have come from that department for this reason.

I suggest that the department should be divided into different modes, one for each form of transportation, and that these modes should be co-ordinated and interrelated. The significant policy change that is essential for this department is that it should use transportation as a development tool across Canada.

Nowhere else in the world does the user pay the total cost of the service to him. The cutback in services to the maritime provinces, plus the increase in rates and the almost seamless web of rates that exists, has become a nightmare to maritime shippers. Every time you change one small rate the reaction among other rates is fantastic.

One result in New Brunswick is that we have an over-supply of wood in one part of the province and an under-supply of wood in another part, and the cost of transporting wood from one section to another is intolerable. Our success story in secondary manufacturing in the agricultural sector is limited but it can be built on and expanded.

Instead of paying increasing freight rates to ship our farm produce to distant markets and buying back cooked meats, bottled jams and canned vegetables, we urgently need a fundamental change in our transportation and DREE policies to enable us to develop plants to purchase and process local products in New Brunswick for sale in New Brunswick and across Canada, and, through tariff changes, to our natural trading partners along the Atlantic seaboard. We have the resource potential to supply and operate plants to process cheese, meats, fruits and vegetables, to name only a few. I urge the government to invest in the future of New Brunswick and to take this giant step in creating good jobs and markets for our farming community. My remarks apply equally, but with less knowledge, to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

The simple concept that we must ask ourselves in terms of transportation cost is: "How much does it cost to get a product to market economically? How much does it cost to get it there now?" Any difference in cost must demand a subsidy, or a roll back in freight rates. A user-pay concept cannot achieve this purpose.

As a transportation system is used more, the cost should be lower. Right now for the railways it must be a paying proposition. Air Canada by statute must contemplate a profit. We cannot possibly discuss rates with the railways because it is a seamless web that only they understand. They do not have enough competition, while our national air carriers have never been refused a fare increase.

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The railways should be required to retain, modernize and upgrade the service they presently give to the total area of the maritimes. Better rail freight cars are absolutely essential for shippers, particularly for agricultural products, and the integration of rail freight and passenger service with other forms

[Mr. Howie.]

of transportation is an important step in developing an efficient transportation system.

The Government of Canada should co-operate in a meaningful manner, on at least a 75-25 per cent basis, with the governments of the Atlantic provinces to put in place a system of modern, all-weather highways to serve Canadians in the Atlantic provinces both now and tomorrow.

Air carriers should be required to consult with local communities before discontinuing service. Air Canada should provide more direct flights between the maritimes and central Canada, even on a subsidized basis. EPA should be encouraged to provide direct flights in the maritimes between maritime centres and centres that do not now receive regular air carrier service. Faster and more frequent air freight service to points in the maritimes is essential.

CP Air should be given access to the Atlantic market to provide more competition for Air Canada. Air Canada should be requested to take note of the excellent in-cabin service provided to maritimers by Eastern Provincial Airways.

Better methods of permitting freight rate increases with railways, such as through a tribunal with government, shippers and railroad representatives, should be evolved to give some relief to captive shippers in the maritimes. Present statutory subsidies should be retained, and a consistent subsidy policy which would expand and improve the present program should be developed. Transportation must be used as a development tool in the maritime provinces. We must put in place in the maritimes a modern transportation system which will enable real growth to take place.

My purpose in raising this resolution and in suggesting this topic be placed with the DREE committee is to provide an opportunity for all members of parliament from the Atlantic provinces to cite examples by which transportation can be improved in that region. They can relate to their own constituencies. With their knowledge and with the use of expert witnesses, I hope we might finally develop transportation as a development tool in a very meaningful way in Atlantic Canada. Transportation in itself is not an answer to the problems of regional disparity, but it is an important segment in the process of arriving at an answer. It requires a co-ordinated focus by all departments of government on this very important subject. Transportation plays a very dominant role in arriving at an ultimate conclusion.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to raise this matter this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Maurice Harquail (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have an opportunity to comment on the questions raised this afternoon relating to transportation. However, I am puzzled with regard to the continuous contradictions raised by hon. members opposite before the House. Transportation is an important question. On the one hand, hon. members opposite indicate that they would like to see the government spend less and say that we are spending much more than we should. On the other hand, they bring in motions and resolutions asking