

*Regional Unemployment*

are not really functioning as well as they could. Perhaps the one in the west is functioning reasonably well in terms of the number of meetings it is having, and perhaps in terms of the identification of goals, but it does occur to the onlooker that not an awful lot of useful, productive progress is being made.

I reiterate my point that in terms of the DREE economic programs which are being carried out to meet the problems we have set forward in our motion, a commitment to rid this country of regional disparity is just simply non-existent. Indeed, in the Standing Committee on Regional Development on May 3, when the minister was asked if Air Canada consulted him about cutbacks in the Atlantic region—this had to do with the so-called unprofitable runs in the Atlantic region operated by Air Canada—he said, and I quote:

Not me personally. I do not know, I am not aware if they have gone through any consultation with my department but I do not think so.

The minister was asked if he thought Air Canada's cutbacks would be detrimental to regional development. He said:

Well I am not totally sure of the implications that it might have on the potential development.

That again was on May 3. He went on a little bit further to say the following:

They answer to the Department of Transport and it is through the Minister of Transport that somebody can really answer the point you are making with me.

Why does the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion not take it upon himself to consult with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) about moves which are detrimental to regional development? Why is it that he is unaware of their impact, even their occurrence, despite the fact that he claims he has a close relationship with MOT with respect to co-ordination of plans and efforts by DREE? I think the minister overstates his case perhaps too much. Granted, he does get involved in the western and Atlantic federal-provincial committees, and I hope out of that some useful endeavours are being made. Perhaps I should be fair. It is not always a one-way street with respect to communication, consultation, and co-operation. The Ministry of Transport also has an obligation to make sure that its planning is fully in tune with the planning of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion.

Just before I leave this business of consultation, co-operation and co-ordination, it seems to me that the method of the former minister of transport, now a member of that other place, of eliminating what he himself described as a transportation mess in this country relied very heavily on close co-operation, consultation, and co-ordination with other governments and the industry generally. What concerns me about this close consultation and so on can be found in just one or two examples which I will cite. One example was the very detrimental effect of the utterances of the Minister of Transport at the Charlottetown Conference, those of the Council of Maritime Premiers, and I think of Mr. Logan from the province of Newfoundland. They put us off a little bit. We were told pretty clearly that user-pay had died as a principal economic tool of this government, but we find that in fact it has not disappeared, Mr. Speaker.

● (2140)

I would ask hon. members to recall the most recent conference of ministers of transport. What the Minister of Transport likes to refer to as inefficient subsidies and the redirecting of these into the upgrading of highways, support for regional air service upgrading in eastern Canada and so on, were not co-ordinated with DREE. I think it is time that the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and the Minister of Transport started bringing their officials together so that they can pursue methods of ensuring that transportation policy and regional economic policy are in tune.

I should like now to touch on a few of the regional services that continue to be of concern to eastern Canada. We must guard against the growing attitude of downgrading as opposed to upgrading rail services in our region. We are pleased that the railway transport committee of the Canadian Transport Commission will hold public hearings, limited as they may be. But I wonder why the committee does not meet on the north and south shores of Quebec in relation to rail passenger service. I am surprised that members from Quebec have not made reference to that glaring oversight in their submissions today.

It must be recognized that one mode of transportation in a region such as Atlantic Canada cannot be improved at the expense of another mode of transportation without serious harm to the total program. What we need is a five to eight-year program of rail bed upgrading, modernization of signal and switching procedures, and the provision of new equipment for both passenger and freight services. In this connection it is interesting to note that tenders closed sometime ago for Canadian Pacific's experimental run between Quebec and Montreal. We would like to know when the minister is going to award the contract and when this experiment will take place. How many trains will run? I suggest that as things stand, transportation programs seem to operate in isolation from each other, to the detriment of the user.

With respect to ferry services, I think that if the minister insists upon the establishment of an independent Crown corporation to handle the Canadian National Railway's ferry service on the east coast, parallel discussions should take place on the essentiality of a marine service to Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. These discussions should cover matters such as no strikes, no withdrawal of service, and no shutdown of service. These things should be worked out ahead of time and it should be decided whether the service is a designated occupation.

We need a five to eight-year air program designed to stabilize regional air carrier services and rationalization of route structures between main line domestic carriers and regional carriers. We also need upgrading of regional and municipal airports with adequate navigational and safety aids to facilitate the third level air service which is so essential, given the geography and sparse population of Atlantic region centres. But this must not be done at the expense of any other mode of transportation.