

*Adjournment Debate*

money than the original train service. Our rail freight service is deteriorating to the point where even CN has forsaken its own rail service and is increasing its use of road transportation. At present 20 per cent of the trailer-truck service is supplied by CN or its charters because it is more profitable for CN to operate by truck over the Trans-Canada Highway since it is absolved of the maintenance burden. The CN is abandoning its own rail system. What we have now is an inefficient passenger service, an inefficient freight service, and a fast deteriorating rail system.

Let us look at the rationalization of DREE support under highways agreements. The department is supposed to help develop our have-not provinces, but it emphasizes un-coordinated policies. DREE is providing new secondary roads in my district and in others on a 90-10 basis, for which we are grateful. I admit that it is helping to provide infrastructure to support the development of our energy potential, our fishing industry, our national park and other industries which we hope will come on-stream. But we are neglecting, hypocritically, the important link between Port-aux-Basques and Corner Brook, Deer Lake and Stephenville triangle which is so basic in the over-all development of our province and which forms the most vital part of the trans-Newfoundland corridor.

● (1822)

The cost of bringing the Trans-Canada Highway to Newfoundland is \$240 million, a cost which the minister knows Newfoundland cannot afford on a 50-50 basis. Under the general development agreements of DREE, a province and the federal government can enter a contract to do almost anything. I cannot therefore accept that this vital and critical need cannot be fulfilled under such an agreement on a 90-10 or 75-25 basis.

Our deteriorating transportation system, both by rail and road, is causing serious effects on the viability of our main industries, pulp and paper and others, which are being hurt because of our distance from off-shore markets.

I would not be so adamant about this if we had a decent rail service, Mr. Speaker. Rather than improving one or the other, however, we are abandoning both. Jobs are continually lost because CN is abandoning rail for rubber, with the result there is a creeping paralysis of both modes.

I can only ask the minister, through his parliamentary secretary, to look at the problem realistically. In order to achieve results from our rich resources in Newfoundland we must have a rationalized, common sense appreciation of what we need to develop, and in Newfoundland we can develop in the Canadian interest. I can only plead with the minister to reconsider his position and to provide the funding commensurate with Newfoundland's requirements and, for the purposes of this exercise, to agree to Newfoundland's request, either through his department or DREE, to finance a highway strengthening program for the province and the country on a more equitable basis.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Charles Lapointe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, even though I am aware of the  
[Mr. Marshall.]

serious problems affecting the Maritimes, especially in the transport area, and even though I agree with the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) that quite often in the Maritimes it is faster to hitchhike than to take the train, I do not entirely agree that everything is inadequate in that part of Canada.

I do not see how one can say that everything is inadequate and wrong in the transport area, which, by the way, is not very kind for the provincial ministers of transport, and say for example that the DREE agreements with the provinces, under which federal and provincial investments in transport are financed on a basis of 90 and 10 per cent, are fine. I do not see how one can say that this is good and everything else is bad and wrong.

I should like to remind the hon. member what the Minister of Transport stated in reply to his question on the operating and the maintenance of highways in the Maritime provinces. I should like to remind him that this, under the Canadian constitution, is clearly a provincial responsibility. The federal government has indicated its willingness to extend financial assistance if necessary to provincial governments directly or indirectly, in order to improve their highway systems, provided this assistance is in line with a number of national objectives.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, and the federal government recognizes this, that the standardization of minimum weights for trucks and the related regulations would represent a very significant benefit to the federal government and the provincial governments concerned. The hon. member is certainly aware that the government accepted in May of this year to spend up to \$125 million over the next three years to improve transportation services in the Maritime provinces. Of course, a large share of these funds, some \$100 million, will be spent on a main road upgrading program, under a 50-50 cost-sharing agreement between the federal and the provincial governments, something which is not to the hon. member's liking.

● (1827)

[*English*]

Upon receipt of a joint request from the responsible maritime provincial ministers this summer, the minister reviewed program proposals and could find no new factors to alter the original view that a 50 per cent federal share of the eligible costs is appropriate in reflecting the extent of "national" interests in the program.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, it is to the mutual benefit of all concerned that the provinces finally accept the government's offer, in this time of fiscal restraint, and that program proposals for improving major highways get under way immediately.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn.

Motion withdrawn.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock tonight.

At 6:29 p.m. the House took recess.