

government's commitment to the development of the Atlantic region, where that development is so badly needed. However, we also considered the diversion of money which was spent in ways which were less efficient than was seen to be possible. Surely that is a principle which ought not to come under criticism from any sensible member who is trying to help this country grow and be more productive.

We created a commission in Newfoundland to pull together all the analyses of the many transportation problems facing that area, and the composition and the terms of reference of that commission were agreed upon with the government of Newfoundland. We do not share common partisan philosophy, but we are capable of agreeing with these governments and working with them when we are able to demonstrate, as we have in these cases, the good sense of the proposals and the benefit to Canada they have. I think hon. members should recognize that as a significant accomplishment.

It is true that in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick the issue of how to move the potatoes which come out of those areas is an extremely sensitive one, but again the setting up of a small work group to report quickly and effectively on this problem, and to pull together in a final way what has been done and studied in this area, has been warmly welcomed in those areas, and I look forward to its results.

On the other side of the country we have a similar kind of situation with British Columbia. There were years of grievances that the mainline ferries between the mainland and Vancouver Island were not receiving support when constitutional agreements for support had been arrived at with Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. This year we reached an agreement with the province of British Columbia whereby we will provide a form of assistance and support for an essential crossing connection, which would always find it difficult to pay its own way completely. That demonstrates what I have been saying constantly, and that is that while there is a general proposition that it ought to be recognized for the sake of productivity in Canada that costs ought to be reflected through a transportation system unless you have a very good reason why they ought not to be, there are these reasons for not doing so: remote areas, difficult access, and so forth.

However, as I said in Hamilton last week, hon. members should really observe—and hon. members in the Conservative party particularly—that it is practically impossible to support the market system without supporting the view that, by and large, transportation costs in relation to the doing of other things and the accomplishing of other objectives should be shown through to the people who choose one mode or another, as with shippers in the Atlantic region. Better that they who ship should choose whether they ship by rail, truck or water than that we as a government should use a bureaucratic approach to interpose particular subsidies and assistance which divert their choice from the most sensible and economic one for them to something else.

I know that Conservatives find it very easy to scoff at the particular words "user pay" because they like to lead people to fear that that means pay excessively. It does not. It means

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being realistic about costs. It means we should have a sensible system which reflects costs, and that is a principle which is being broadly introduced in many ways. When we introduce that in the air mode of transportation, we are actually moving to answer some of the criticisms which have been at other times aimed at government policy for distorting in favour of one mode against another and, of course, our very principle is to move against that.

Simultaneously, in the air mode I ask hon. members opposite if they have any criticism about the increased consultation which has been instituted with the airlines and with the other users of services so that their views will be fully taken into consideration in future major developments all over this country in transportation, which had not been the policy of the past? It is the policy today, and it is another example of how the government has been moving in order to make transportation more responsive, more sensible, and more an instrument of productivity of a high form.

All across this country people are interested in rail passenger services, and here again surely hon. members opposite might have some comment on the view that in order for rail passenger service to become a potential significant contributor as a means of transportation again we have had to change the policy of the past under which rail passenger service was shortchanged. We have done so. We are committed to moving to 100 per cent subsidies between what passengers can pay and what is needed to provide a good and reasonable service, rather than leave the service on a declining basis because of a shortage of revenue to the railways. That, I hope, is a policy upon which hon. members opposite will finally comment.

What we have also had to do, however, is say to the CTC, as an instrument to examine these questions in all their local aspects and implications, that there are some services for which alternatives are clearly available where the passenger load factor is not adequate to justify the kind of expense to the taxpayer which would be required to maintain the service, and that in those cases the service ought not to be continued at those great expenses. That surely is a balanced and reasonable approach. It puts on the record that the government has come down on the side of future development of rail passenger service and on the side of the hope that it can gradually attract more passengers, demonstrate its usefulness, and indeed move toward self-sufficiency in its main areas, even though it will always need assistance in more remote areas. I would ask hon. members opposite to comment on that, and to have some regard for the taxpayer and government spending. Simply paying out money from the taxpayer does not mean that the cost has been avoided; the cost is real, and those who pretend it is avoided in that way simply miss the boat.

● (1640)

Our ports policy statement indicated a clear intention to move toward port commissions and decentralization of all functions which can be properly decentralized, into port regions. This will minimize bureaucracy at the centre, and I would have thought this would have been commented upon