

perceives from time to time to be the prevailing attitude among Canadians toward various modes of transportation.

The transportation situation in the west has not, unfortunately, been helped very much by having a transport minister from the west. A certain former member of this House, while he was transport minister, was at least candid enough to admit that the transportation situation in this country was in a mess. But now regrettably, a patronizing "we'll tell you what's good for you" attitude seems to prevail in that portfolio. The minister's most recent innovation, the user-pay concept, sounds fine in principle but will be most unfair in practice.

The government's methods of spending restraint are extremely unjust and not a little hypocritical, as well. It is all right for the Canadian traveller to be paying more and more for less and less transportation services! The cancellation of the At and East rates through the repeal of parts of the Railway Act, provided for by clause 15 of this bill, will mean the same for the western grains producer—paying more for less. To this government that is a legitimate way to reduce expenditures. Apparently the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) thinks it is perfectly all right to spend over \$10,000 on a single flight in a government Jetstar for some sort of holiday or special social affair. Incredibly this same minister defends his actions and then has the effrontery to tell Canadians that his services came cheap at that price. Politicians with such high opinions of themselves and their worth very often get a nasty surprise at election time when they discover that the electorate does not have the same opinion.

This country, in particular western Canada, is in desperate need of a transportation policy. Fast, efficient and inexpensive modes of transport are vital to a country like ours in order to pull the nation together, to increase understanding among the regions, and to preserve national unity. We must have an over-all, comprehensive transportation policy with clearly defined priorities and appropriate and clearly developed roles for every mode of transport, road, air and rail. Each has its capacities and its limitations, and each has its contribution to make to a comprehensive transportation policy. Unlike the Liberal party, we have such a transportation policy. We believe that there should be consultation and co-operation with the provinces as to the real transportation needs of the country. A Progressive Conservative government will co-operate with the provinces in providing the transportation which they want and need, not what others may think they should have.

The people of southwestern Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan badly need and want an air service, and the governments of my province, Manitoba, and of Saskatchewan were ready a year ago to provide it. It does not exist to this day and perhaps never will, principally because this federal Liberal government does not want the provincial governments of these two western provinces operating these types of ventures. In the meantime the residents of Brandon, Dauphin and Yorkton do without an air service, and at Brandon's McGill field there sits an ultra modern, fully equipped air terminal and control tower, at which a regularly scheduled commercial flight has never landed.

Restraint of Government Expenditures

The centralizing tendencies of the government are not only insensitive and heavy-handed; they are unrealistic and completely inappropriate in a country like Canada. This country is not Luxembourg or Monaco, and as desirable as that might perhaps be, from the point of view of administrating and governing it just is never going to be like those small, homogeneous, unitary states. It is big, diverse, fragmented and regionalized. The Prime Minister has travelled a lot in this country, so he should understand it better than he does. It cannot be held together through tight compression. It can only be held together by long, flexible bonds tying the regions, which are not any less secure because they are flexible.

The Prime Minister's rigid insensitivity and lack of understanding seemed, at least to me, to be particularly evident on the night of the Quebec election. The Prime Minister's curt message to Mr. Lévesque did not offer him any congratulations, which is perhaps understandable, but it reminded Mr. Lévesque, in a most unnecessary and patronizing way, I thought, that he had not won a mandate for separation, a fact of which Mr. Lévesque is certainly aware. Whatever else René Lévesque may be, he is not a stupid man, and the Prime Minister's curt note was an unnecessary and rude insult to the intelligence of the new Quebec premier. Ottawa-Quebec relations will certainly be difficult enough in the next few years, as will the federal government's relations with all the provinces. The way the Prime Minister handled this first bit of federal-provincial relations with Quebec does not augur very well for the future of federal-provincial relations.

● (2050)

We in this party do not think our commitment to federalism or our belief in one united nation is diminished or compromised by being flexible. Flexibility and understanding are part of our program of decentralization and they are what will make it work. We believe that decentralization means more than just moving government departments out of Ottawa. Decentralization means nothing if it does not also mean a change in attitudes and a more understanding, more accommodating, more flexible approach to governing this nation.

Bill C-19 is a relatively short bill although some of its provisions will have a great impact on certain groups in Canada. But it is not so much the specific provisions of this measure which are so objectionable—though they are—it is rather its lofty intent. The government is offering this bill as proof that it really is restraining spending. It is a hypocritical act by a government which in eight years has become one of the most inept, insensitive, arrogant, spendthrift governments we have ever had, totally out of touch with every group, every region, every part of this nation. Every time a choice faces this government it does the wrong thing, as if it were programmed to do so. And all Canadians watch, as a mother watches her child deliberately reach for a hot stove, stunned at the government's ineptitude. Government members say to us, "What would you do?" Mr. Speaker, how could we possibly do any worse?