

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. The Chair understands that the House could be disposed to consider this bill in committee of the whole rather than refer it to the standing committee. Is that agreed?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** It is so ordered.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, read the third time and passed.

● (1712)

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[Translation]

### RAILWAY AMENDMENT ACT, 1978

MEASURE TO ENSURE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION  
IMPROVEMENTS NOT EXPENSE TO REST OF COUNTRY

**Mr. Claude Tessier (Compton)** moved:

That Bill C-233, respecting the policy of financing transportation in non-metropolitan areas, be read for the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-233 which I introduce this afternoon deals with the financing of transportation in non-metropolitan areas and more especially in outlying areas removed from the important economic centres of Canada. It is aimed at amending the Railway Act so that improvements of transportation in metropolitan areas should not be prejudicial to the remainder of the country. You understand that it is my duty to object to some plans to reduce or even eliminate services as well as to any increase toward self-financing which would lead to higher costs to users. As for us, and I want to be the spokesman for areas in Canada more or less removed from large urban centres, it would mean that we would still be farther from economic centres, that there should be increasing possibilities of massive exodus from our peripheral areas. However, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to admit that there are difficulties and that the solutions are complex, but what we do not accept is that service reductions should be justified by the need to reduce government expenses and the profitability of transportation companies. The arguments of the minister are valid, but he must defend them since he has all the talents and the effectiveness of a true Minister of Transport. We must therefore be even more cautious if we want to ensure the protection of our regions. The government should not suggest across-the-board answers to reduce costs and eliminate services since we would consider this unacceptable. In fact, what the government is now doing is subtracting, subtracting grants, subtracting services, driving people away from certain areas, which means that certain regions are becoming increasingly

### Transportation

vast and under-populated with fantastic costs per capita when you consider the distances and the transportation volume.

In short, Mr. Speaker, what we want is for the government to bring out a comprehensive transportation policy instead of any changes that it would want to make. We do not want to be conned into co-operating with those who would find arguments to deprive us of services if tomorrow those same people do not give us the promised solutions. This is a matter of distributive justice; we should not think only of the number of people whom we will have to learn to serve in this country, but also of serving the people wherever they may be.

The facts that I want to submit to this House are as follows. First, in our peripheral areas, in the Montreal region, for instance, the problems with passenger and freight transport are increasing every day. Second, if we consider present and future energy costs and potential, and the need to conserve energy, we believe that the government has the responsibility to give not only direction, but also assured leadership in this area. Third, as taxpayers and on behalf of other Canadian taxpayers, we cannot accept that this government be content to suffer deficits, even if they are real, without requiring this same government to take the means to find true solutions for now and for the future. And for us, this answer is not to eliminate deficits and to continue to increase the population of urban areas.

Another fact: remote areas are becoming increasingly remote, so it is not true to say that distances have become irrelevant. You just have to evaluate the cost to be convinced that we are moving backwards, that we are becoming increasingly remote from all points of view, thus more vulnerable and with ever fewer economic incentives.

If the government considers that Montreal and Toronto are the end of the world, it should tell us so, otherwise the same government should give back the initiative to those who in the past had found and paid for means to promote development, particularly a railway transportation system in remote areas.

Thus, before curtailing further any of the existing services, the CTC and the government should introduce a global transportation policy for today and tomorrow. We cannot accept less. It is not only a matter of profitability, but a matter of viability. In other words, who will have the means to stay in a remote area, at what condition and at what price? Profitability has been proven and it always spells reduction or even unavoidable elimination of services. No one has the means to pay for that profitability but no one can accept the elimination of services, not even the government, and the only answer to which we are entitled is a global transportation policy in which the government will assume its responsibilities, as will the citizen in full awareness of the situation.

I for one would think that railways will regain their status as they become again the only means available for passenger and freight transportation. We should right now plan the infrastructures, the equipment and the services our regions need to