

National Transportation Policy

who is the chairman of the planning committee of Huron county:

The rail passenger service depreciated until finally in 1970 the service to Huron county was stopped. No matter what the economics of the service dictated it is apparent to the people of this area that while parts of this country have had its services increased ours has suffered in the transition. The roads were adequate at one time, therefore as the rail passenger service deteriorated the people turned more and more to the use of the roads by automobiles. Thus, as the highway traffic multiplied and rail passenger service was withdrawn, the "time of travel" increased for the people in Huron county.

It is quite obvious to anyone who uses the roads to any extent that they are becoming more and more crowded, particularly on weekends, and that the time of travel has almost doubled. The brief continues:

To this area "time of travel", whether by road or rail, has become very important. We must compete with other areas of the country for industries and tourists to enhance our economic base. The cost of transportation has increased, but also the requirements for transportation has increased in all areas and especially in Huron county. Our location requires a speedy means of entry and exit for our industries, our citizens and our visitors.

The brief goes on to say there is evidence that transportation facilities, particularly for people wishing to use train services such as students and senior citizens, are not adequate. At the hearings in Walkerton, the room was packed with senior citizens who depend on rail service to provide transportation to the larger centres.

It was apparent from many of the briefs that people feel the railways have deliberately tried to discourage them from travelling by train. To travel from Sarnia to Toronto, it is necessary to go to London and this service is still operating. People from Huron county must go to London or Stratford to get the train, and both are about 45 or 50 miles away. It was brought out that people often have to stand in baggage cars from London to Toronto. When a representative of the CNR appeared before the committee, he denied some of these allegations but the people who travel these routes seemed to know what it was like. Apparently, although it would be a simple matter to leave extra cars in London to be used when there is a big crowd going from London to Toronto, this is not done and only a few cars are brought in from Sarnia. If there is not enough room for all the passengers, those who do not get on the train must get to Toronto as best they can. It would seem to be a simple matter to leave extra cars in London and have personnel there to serve them. It appears that when one of the official cars transporting some of the top brass of the railroads arrives in London, there is lots of help to move the cars around but for the ordinary paying passenger there is not much assistance.

Some of the advertising done by the railroads is not very helpful, and possibly even harmful. They seem to do their advertising in spurts of about two weeks and then forget about it for the rest of the year. They should continue to upgrade their service and let the people know what kind of service is available.

• (1730)

If there are enough people using the rail service, the application is not for discontinuance. The railroads must apply for discontinuance of passenger service in order to be granted a subsidy under the act. That act was passed in

[Mr. McKinley.]

1966, shortly after I came to this House. I remember well when the Hon. J. W. Pickersgill set himself up as chairman of the Canadian Transport Commission. The act states that the railroad must apply to discontinue the service. The commission can then rule that the service shall continue, and the railroad is granted a subsidy of up to 80 per cent of its losses.

I believe this is what the railways were looking for when they discontinued the service out of Huron county. They put their case so well before the Canadian Transport Commission that the commission allowed them to drop the service: everyone was fooled. I do not think there would be any danger of the service being dropped if the railways provided the type of service that people want. There would be more passengers. Instead, the railways are trying to get rid of passengers.

I have a lot of material here, Mr. Speaker, but my time is limited. I would also like to point out that there are no baggagemen to assist older people and women with children. City maps should be provided to passengers to assist them when they arrive at their destination. There is no decent food service. We have already heard about the stale sandwiches and lack of coffee. The railways have done away with dining cars. It used to be a pleasure to travel by train, but many of the things that made it a pleasure are no longer available.

I wish to refer to a brief submitted to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications by the province of Ontario. Some of their recommendations which I heartily endorse are as follows:

(1) Passenger rail services which were discontinued on November 1, 1970, should be re-established immediately. Decisions involving equipment to be used and the scheduling of such re-established services should be made in consultation with the residents of the communities involved. It became clear during the discontinuance hearings that inadequate equipment and inconvenient schedules played a part in the losses reported by the railways.

(2) Federal authorities in conjunction with the province of Ontario should immediately undertake studies which would involve public hearings with a view to determining a minimum railway passenger train network as defined in relationship to the most economic, efficient and adequate transportation system making the best use of all available modes of transportation at the lowest total cost.

(3) A moratorium should be placed—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member's time has expired. Under the order of the House there is no provision for an extension of time allocated to hon. members.

[Translation]

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I am most happy to speak on the motion moved by the Progressive Conservative party and which reads as follows:

This House regrets that the government has failed to develop the National Transportation Policy, pursuant to section 3 of the National Transportation Act, and has failed to take measures to revitalize and rebuild Canadian transportation for present and future needs.

If I take the floor on this matter it is simply because I have noticed the deplorable state of the transport services in our region, especially those intended for passengers. I think that for a long time, and more so in recent years, the CN authorities have done their utmost to modernize freight services in our region. Surely it was quite profit-