

*Canadian National Railways and Air Canada*

months to our energy crisis and to the difficulty in finding a select and safe means of transportation. In this regard I think reference should be made to some comments of one of the higher officials of Canadian National Railways, Mr. David Blair, vice-president of the Atlantic region. He compared the transportation of energy resources by train with their transportation by truck, that is, by road. I can tell you that Mr. David Blair views most sympathetically the matter of transportation policy affecting the Atlantic region, and his words should be heeded.

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Mr. Blair explained that transportation policies and services were based on the assumption that oil and gasoline would be plentiful and cheap for many years to come—of course, that is not the case any more—that these attitudes must change and would change as soon as transportation planners looked at which form of land transport provides the most effective use of the world's limited fuel resources.

A study conducted in the United States in 1970 showed that of the total amount of transportation fuel used in that country, trains accounted for only 3.5 per cent, as against 21.7 per cent for trucks; yet in the same period the railways handled almost twice as many ton-miles of traffic as the highway system. The study showed trains had a gross efficiency of 550 ton-miles per gallon of fuel, compared with 37.6 ton-miles per gallon for highway vehicles. I am sure the figures would be similar for Canada. I hope we can be supplied with similar figures as they apply to our railways, which always seem to be losing money with the taxpayer making up the losses.

If this is true for commodities being shipped by freight, the carrying of passengers must also be considered with regard to conserving fuel and energy. This makes me wonder why Canadian National is on a crash course to eliminate passenger service in Canada, if we can believe the words of the vice-president, Mr. Blair, and there is certainly no reason to doubt them. Another point of interest made by Mr. Blair refers to the electrification of railways in Canada, a process that is being extended in many parts of North America and, indeed, throughout the world. It is a step that offers even more efficiency, as well as a pollution-free transportation system, something for which everyone seems to be striving.

Something else that is difficult to understand is the apparent justification of governments, both federal and provincial, to go in two directions in providing transportation for Canadians. On one hand everyone is complaining about the fact that the cost of land is becoming exorbitant. It is one of the main problems in trying to find land for housing. The government is buying up the same land to provide road accommodation for vehicles, at the expense of the taxpayers. The costs are running away with our planners in government. On the other hand the government, the Department of Transport or the CNR, are eliminating passenger service because of losses. The taxpayer also has to pay for these. What we are really doing is doubling the effect of poor planning on the citizens of Canada when we should be upgrading railway service for Canadians, something which would overcome the runaway costs of transportation.

[Mr. Marshall.]

Canada, with its vastness, was opened to opportunity by the provision and indeed the vision of a railway system to open up the west, the east, the north and the south. However, governments of the day—this is becoming increasingly evident—did not improve the system of transportation along these lines but, instead, changed direction because of political timing. The end result has been a jungle of government bureaucracy with the various responsible departments going off in different directions. This has brought us to a point in time where no one knows in which direction he is going. If we continue in this direction we will reach a stage in our development where, because of lack of common sense planning, we will destroy our objective for political ambitions.

It is obvious that with our vast expanse of land in Canada transportation is becoming a very important factor because of its great cost to our citizens. Our planners have become blind to the fact that we must direct every available dollar to controlling pollution and acquiring land for more vehicle transportation. Why, then, have we not realized, as have other countries, that a railway system, particularly because of our vastness, is vital to reasoned development of our nation with its vast resources? However, our planners are going in exactly the opposite direction at the expense of our capability to provide continued progress for the benefit of Canadians.

If it is the intention of the government to push all 22 million Canadians to urban centres such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver in the next decade, we might as well quit and eliminate those provinces which are being ignored in the thrust toward providing a quality of life for all Canadians wherever they may live. The province of Newfoundland is a perfect example of what has happened with regard to the devious means of cutting costs without any projected planning by our supposed experts. For some reason or other rail passenger service was eliminated in favour of road transportation because it was decided, at the expense of the public, that road transportation is what is required for the development of our province.

Newfoundland is at a stage now, some 25 years after confederation, where it has the lowest category of trans-Canada roads, rail and transportation service of any province in Canada. There is no province in Canada where factors dictate more that a reasonable and planned transportation policy with rail service for both commodities and passengers would be beneficial to Canadians residing in that province. The problem of transportation in that island province should be directed toward its isolation and the need for uninterrupted service for its future development. It is time meaningful discussions took place to resolve the many simple problems that exist.

There is much talk about the exorbitant cost of living in the province of Newfoundland. The simple reason is the cost of transportation not only to the urban centres of transportation dispersal but to the isolated areas of our province which are suffering most. There is not much point quoting figures and the differences in the cost of food, housing, fuel and all the necessities of family living, but there are certainly enough examples to point out the low priority in which improvements in transportation services are considered in the province of Newfoundland.