

Government Orders

control over that vital need of transportation that we all need in a country as large as Canada.

Mr. Ray Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised at the hon. member's presentation. I can certainly appreciate the need for local control, but I would think the government's motivation, if its track record is any indication, is one of cost-cutting and abandoning of responsibility.

I would like to use a parallel in the marine sector. I am hoping the minister can clarify the situation today. In the government's area of wharves and harbours, it looks to be that the harbours on the coast of British Columbia are approaching 75 to 80 years. In the past, it has been the responsibility of the government. What we get is an indication that it intends to abandon that responsibility as those facilities wear out and that anybody who wants it can rebuild it on their own.

I would ask the minister if he might through a comment on the member's presentation indicate to this House that that is not the case.

• (1750)

In a place like Zeballos, local control is important. Their wharf burns down and the Minister refuses to respond. They offered to try and come up with half of the cost of doing it and, again, failure to respond. Local organization and local initiative attempts to work with the department, and nothing. An example like Gibsons during the last election. They slap a blue sign up, a serious malfunction in the breakwater that causes a hazard in the harbour and it really needs repair, but again no response. Lots of local initiative and willingness to work, but nothing happens.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Who is the Minister of Transport?

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Again, I share with the hon. member concerns that places like Klemtu and Bella Bella for years have attempted to get roll-on roll-off service where the cost of living is directly related to that facility and yet the Minister again—and I am not pointing out this Minister, I am speaking in general terms—but the Conservative Government is more interested in abandoning its responsibilities and forcing those costs on the community. Port Hardy in zoning and I would also use Coal Harbour where they

were saying cost recovery is more important than working within the planning of the community. They disregard the advice of local people in the marine areas. They have fish plants tied up near tourist resorts on their harbour because the Department of Transport felt that getting a cost recovery or a return on their facility was more important than working within the zoning and planning initiatives of the local municipalities.

I think these kinds of things are really in danger with this airport idea. Places like Fair Harbour and Kyugot where you cannot get garbage picked up and the federal wharves are absolutely inundated with garbage. There are local people trying to work on recycling solutions, trying to assist the department and it says: "We cannot do it".

I see we are drawing to a close. I would hope that the Minister would take an opportunity to respond. Does he intend to do the same thing with airports, abandon the community, allow them to take over the costs and essentially use it as a privatization and an abandoning of responsibility? I am hoping that the hon. member will comment on it and possibly the minister as well.

Mr. Comuzzi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for that question. He has mentioned some places which, I apologize, I have not heard of. I am sure they are not airports in this country.

What we are talking about here is a simple concept. What we are talking about is decentralizing the authority of the federal government from Ottawa to other communities in this country. As I see Bill C-85, it is a decentralization process that we have all come—those of us who do not live in and around this community—to grips with the fact that we are becoming just too big to operate out of one centre in the country and that there is a process in place to decentralize the decision-making powers in allowing smaller communities to participate.

Hopefully my friend and all of us are involved in this government. Whatever side of the House you sit on, we are all involved and we are all very interested in cutting costs. The only way we are going to cure the deficit and help in the debt is if we all put our collective minds to how we can administer this country, how we can keep offering the services that we and all Canadians have come to enjoy and still do it in a more frugal, cost-efficient method.