

talked about and which we may still be talking about even after the new year.

Sometimes I think we expect too much from the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand). He said he was bringing out a new policy and referred to it in speeches and in reply to questions in the House. We looked for reference to ferry services in Canada, but there was none. There was no reference to regional air service, to pilotage, to the National Harbours Board or to a national trucking policy. The labour situation was not mentioned. We have heard about it in the occasional press release, with such obvious statements as: Labour problems are hurting our transportation industry. There is no point in commenting on such statements, especially when the government must shoulder a good part of the blame for the present labour situation in Canada. There was a promise of \$270 million for urban transportation in the 1974 election campaign, but there is no mention of it in this statement. Perhaps it was just an election promise.

I could go through the statement paragraph by paragraph, Mr. Speaker, but there is no point in it. We are very disappointed with the minister today. On page 11, he stated:

For example, what we are proposing envisages the use of transportation as an instrument of national policy, rather than as a passive support service—

He concluded by saying:

Transportation has always played an historic role in uniting this country, Mr. Speaker. It has always been an instrument of national purpose.

Such fuzzy-headed statements make this document virtually useless as a direction for transportation policy. I am not going to take up any more time criticizing or commenting on the minister's statement, except to say that it is a statement of the obvious. Considering the time and money that the government has supposedly spent on the document, it is sadly lacking in direction. We hope that the minister's staff will come up with some meaningful changes to the National Transportation Act which will implement some of the generalities the minister has talked about.

It has not been demonstrated to us that the minister is running his own department. The document that the minister spent 40 minutes reading only increases our frustration because of the apparent slide that is taking place in the federal transportation system. We are disappointed in the extreme, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised to take the floor right now as I thought that the party on my right—

An hon. Member: The spokesman for the party is not here.

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): They will probably come back.

First, I wish to commend the minister for the statement he made today. The minister—

An hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Transportation Policy

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): They start shouting "Hear, hear!" Wait a moment.

An hon. Member: He deserves congratulations.

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): Yes, he deserves praise for his statement. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) has disclosed something that everybody knows when he said that our transportation system is faulty in every respect and that there are improvements to be made. To make those improvements, he intends at last to consult provinces, expeditors, carriers and even the general public. I think that the minister made a significant commitment this afternoon.

He seems to say this afternoon: "In recent years, as ministers, we watched trains, boats and airplanes passing and now we have decided to do something, to stop being passive. We have decided to work."

If the minister is sincere, as I am prepared to believe, I think it is a start that was long awaited by everyone in this country but those announcements, Mr. Speaker, remind me of those we read in all papers when a new legislation is proclaimed. The announcement of that new legislation in the papers appears in the main as a blessing for everyone but when one considers that legislation and scrutinizes it a bit one realizes that it contains a lot of restrictions and when the regulations to implement it are added there won't be anything left in the end. What looked very nice fizzles out.

I would not want the same thing to happen to the minister's good intentions. I am sure that if he finally decided to get on with the job the opposition will not hamper him in his work; on the contrary, we hoped so much for that day to come that the minister can be assured of our full co-operation.

This afternoon I listened to his policy statements when he said, and I quote:

... a total transportation system for Canada, providing accessibility and equity of treatment for users is an essential instrument of support for the achievement of national, economic and social objectives;

I say, Mr. Speaker, that I weigh all those words, I keep them in mind when they say they want to give equal treatment in all areas, when we know what claims were made, for example, in our areas, what claims were made, and what a deaf ear were received in return of the request for essential services. They said, "Well, the service is not viable." The minister said this afternoon—and I was glad to hear it—that at least as far as passenger service was concerned he was considering service more than viability, and about freight service, in the brief submitted, it was mainly viability. And that is good. I think a distinction must be made between those two services. What provocations we had to endure in years past, with the same old profitability requirement, being put forward when it came to passenger service in our area. Clearly, our freight service is the most productive in Canada. As for passenger service, of course we do not have the population to warrant the kind of service Montreal or Quebec City have. But nonetheless, the Saguenay-Lake St. John area is bringing fantastic freight revenues to the CN, and this is why we are saying: "In all fairness, give us at least adequate passenger service". What is being done? The minister is probably not aware. From July 20, because there are