

*Atlantic Region Transport Policy*

liament has taken this action through the CTC to help transportation in the Atlantic provinces. The hon. member for Moncton mentioned the phasing out of subsidies; he says he does not want hand-outs. Nor do I. But I want subsidies to help us obtain business and find new markets, though I do not want them to remain forever.

I am a Canadian and I do not want to see the MFRA and ARFA go on forever. I hope they can be phased out. But we have to be careful not to reduce them at the wrong time. We cannot have it both ways, saying we don't want handouts and we don't want subsidies to be phased out. Let's not fool ourselves, though—we cannot expect the national treasury to subsidize the Maritimes forever. I appreciate the efforts of this and former governments in regional development, be they with respect to infrastructure or job creation, but I hope the Maritimes will not always require this type of assistance. The new premier of Nova Scotia seems to think that in the near future the province will not be receiving equalization grants. I think this is a good sign. I hope to see the day when my province will not need equalization payments, MFRA or ARFA, because we will be self-sustaining and competitive.

I thank the hon. member for Moncton and congratulate him for raising this question. I know the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East wishes to speak on the motion. I think it is a good motion and is consistent with what this government has been trying to do. It is good to use modern approaches, but we must recognize the problems. As I said, we cannot have it both ways. When we look for assistance for the Maritimes, we must make sure that it does not help central Canada to exploit us more. It must be selective and it must help maritime investors develop the area.

I am sure we will have contributions from west coast members from both sides of the House. I think my remark of a short while ago may have been taken the wrong way. It was not intended to give the impression that I do not like to hear their views; I am always ready to listen to their advice.

**Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni):** Mr. Speaker, if I had the art of talking with tongue in cheek I would say that I was astonished that the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Thomas) felt it necessary to put this notice of motion on the order paper, calling for the establishment of a transportation policy for the Atlantic region. I recall very well how that knight in shining armour from the Atlantic region, the former member for Bonavista-Twillingate—at that time Minister of Transport—with great verve brought into this House a new national transportation act. We were to have a brave new world of transportation in Canada. It was to bring to an end all the problems of transportation that had beset us since confederation.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** With him as president!

**Mr. Barnett:** The strange part is, Mr. Speaker, that since his departure from this chamber we seem to have heard less and less about this brave new world and the millennium. In fact, I find myself wondering whether he

[Mr. Breau.]

wore himself out in his rhetorical efforts when piloting the bill through, with its flowery preamble, so that when he got into the ivory tower of the Canadian Transport Commission he had to spend his time recovering.

Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, I rise to indicate support and sympathy for the sentiments expressed in the motion and by members from that part of the country who have supported it in this House. However, I think it would have been even more appropriate if the mover of the motion had left out the phrase "for the Atlantic region" and suggested that the government should immediately declare a transportation policy based upon modern solutions. This would put us back where we were when the former Minister of Transport moved second reading of the new transportation act and we could once again engage in a vigorous and, at times, inspiring debate such as we had then.

● (4:50 p.m.)

I am not saying this because I am unaware of the transportation problem. As far as British Columbia is concerned, I sometimes think that the national transportation policy for that province began and ended 100 years ago when we entered confederation on the basis of the railway being built to the Pacific coast. Since then we have been as much on the fringe of things as the Atlantic region. I might say there is in this regard a particular point to be made by a member representing a constituency on Vancouver Island. Unfortunately, we jumped rather prematurely at a proposition which seemed enticing to the people of the area at the time. I understand the same question is now under some consideration in the Atlantic provinces. I refer to the formation of a union. I have often thought what a difference there might have been in federal action in respect of transportation had the Crown colony of Vancouver Island not joined the Crown colony of British Columbia prior to 1871, when we joined the rest of the union that is now called Canada.

When I said the original commitment related to ownership more or less, the fact is that the commitment which was understood at the time to involve the building of a railway line to Esquimalt at the southern end of Vancouver Island is one which has not yet been fulfilled. That, of course, is an area of debate which comes up from time to time in the part of Canada from which I come. It is also one which is illustrative of the fact that to many of us, whether we come from the Atlantic coast or the Pacific coast, much still needs to be done before we will be satisfied that we have what the motion refers to as a transportation policy based on modern solutions. Mr. Speaker, with those few comments I will yield the floor to any hon. member who may wish to comment on the resolution.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall).

**Mr. Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) very courteously yielded the floor to the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau) who has a local interest in this motion and had to