

Routine Proceedings

It has been an interesting time for me as Reform's national transport critic. Each major policy the minister has introduced has had my support in concept. As I explained recently to a New Brunswick reporter, the minister has very Reform like concepts; now if we could only convince him to adopt more Reform like implementation.

The minister spoke of many policies, including the national airport policy. Although I support its concept, this policy has a tendency to skim profits and leave several of the airport authorities struggling for future financial viability.

On the commercialization of air navigation services, I support this move but there are still many unanswered questions about the Hughes contract and how it will impact, with its deleted features and increased costs, on the final agreement and on the financial viability of NavCanada in the future.

On the international air transportation policy, given the initial backroom dealing of the government, I am glad to see it has come up with a clear and reasonable policy at last.

The government went ahead with the much requested open skies policy while stifling Pearson airport with its unwarranted political decision to cancel a contract that would have enabled Toronto to compete with the best for the new hub concepts. As it is, over \$5 billion has been spent at airports within one hour's flight of Toronto to enable them to compete with new hub business while Pearson languishes with decrepit, outdated terminals I and II. The contract would have seen \$350 million already spent at Pearson with much more in progress. The government has spent nothing, has announced no alternative construction plans and has no money. The final cost to the Canadian taxpayer will likely run well over a billion dollars.

On the privatization of CN, again the concept was good but the implementation was terrible. The new private company is legislated to remain headquartered forever in one location whether that is best for the company or not. I asked for an amendment that would have seen the shares of that company first offered to Canadians before opening sales to the rest of the world. The Liberals refused. The results were that although there was an unsatisfied demand for the shares here in Canada, 40 per cent were sold exclusively to foreign purchasers.

On the Canada Transportation Act, committee handling of this has been better than it was with Bill C-89. A more open approach to Reform amendments has seen the bill made more reasonable. There is hope for a good bill if Parliament accepts the voice of the majority of witnesses who asked for the removal of clause 27(2). Surely the government will consider this. The alternative is to tell all the witnesses their testimony was

meaningless and there is no point in appearing before committees again in the future.

Now the minister is ready to proceed with the Canada marine act. Once again I am in favour of the concept but I worry about the detail and the implementation. I put the minister on notice of the following points which differ from those recommended by the Liberal majority in the Standing Committee on Transport.

New port authorities must be better protected from government cash grabs than they have been in the past, and some of the airport authorities are being faced with that now. The minister said representatives will be nominated by port users and government. The committee recommendation refers to the government appointing at least the majority. That is unacceptable. Government representation, yes; control, no.

The committee is also recommending a ports capital assistance program. The main emphasis it placed on this was to bring non-commercial ports to upgrade them to become self-sufficient. The idea has some merit as long as it is not used to subsidize a port to compete directly with an unsubsidized Canadian port.

The minister's suggested policy regarding cost recovery of ice breaking services is unacceptable. User pay is a great Reform concept, once again accepted by the minister but potentially implemented incorrectly. Users should pay only for what they use, use only what they need and pay for it at a commercially fair and reasonable rate.

The minister talks about revising the marine pilot act, as did the committee. As he does this he should keep in mind that all regions have a problem with the pilotage and he should not create national policy to deal with regional problems. I support the concept of the privatization of Marine Atlantic. I would like the minister to consider the concept of the in depth study of cross-departmental financial impacts.

• (1025)

The province of Nova Scotia has recently completed an impact study on the *Bluenose* ferry. It would save something over \$4 million by closing down but the impact in other departments and other jurisdictions would cost as much as \$15 million. These things must be harmonized together.

Marine Atlantic proposes to close the ferry in the winter but that study suggests this would create a net financial loss to the taxpayers. These new concepts must be considered.

I find I have got on fairly well with the minister. Amid all the talks of cabinet shuffles, I hope the Prime Minister sees fit to leave him where he is. I would hate to have to break in a new one now.