

• (1500)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—ALLEGED FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION POLICY TO TAKE CARE OF PRESENT AND FUTURE CANADIAN NEEDS

Mr. Charles H. Thomas (Moncton) moved:

This House regrets that the government has failed to develop the National Transportation Policy, pursuant to section 3 of the National Transportation Act, and has failed to take measures to revitalize and rebuild Canadian transportation for present and future needs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, judging from the recent exchange between the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) and the hon. member for Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nowlan), it should be a very interesting debate this afternoon.

One of the most important issues facing Canada today is the development of a sound, co-ordinated, interrelated and forward looking transportation system. The future of Canada, politically, economically and environmentally, depends on it. The next 20 years will play a major part in deciding that future.

On September 1, 1966 when the Hon. J. W. Pickersgill introduced his new policy for transportation in Canada, he spoke in glowing terms of what it would mean for the future. According to Mr. Pickersgill, and this is recorded at page 7990 of *Hansard* for September 1, 1966, it was not his intention to scrap the basic corporate structure of the railways or any other form of transportation, but it was his intention, and I quote:

—to create a framework within which they can operate in a way which, in our view, will not only better serve the public—which is the main consideration—

I underline that.

—but which will also better ensure the Canadian treasury and the Canadian taxpayers against unnecessary and undue charges, and in some cases duplicated charges for duplicated services.

Unfortunately, the government has totally failed to develop a national transportation policy pursuant to section 3 of the National Transportation Act and has failed to rebuild and revitalize Canadian transportation in accordance with present and future needs. Section 3 of that act outlines the purposes of the new policy, which were to make the best use of all available methods of transportation and to co-ordinate them under terms, conditions and tariffs which would make them competitive and compensatory. In addition, the act was purportedly designed to ensure that all forms of transportation would be co-ordinated under tolls and tariffs and conditions which would not constitute an undue obstacle to the interchange of commodities between various points in Canada and which would not discourage the development of industry in areas where poor transportation presented a serious problem.

Mr. Pickersgill's opening statement on that date, as recorded at page 7995 of *Hansard*, drew attention to the manner in which the legislation followed the principles laid down by the MacPherson commission inasmuch as an

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attempt was being made to develop a policy in accordance with which the railways—and the railway companies were specifically mentioned in this case—would be required to perform their duties in the national or social interest. If these services could not be provided economically, losses would be paid largely from the public treasury. In other words—and here I quote directly what Mr. Pickersgill said—“We should not put the whole burden on the railways for continuing these services.” It is because the government has completely failed to develop such a policy that I felt compelled to propose my motion today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomas (Moncton): Since Confederation, Canada's national transportation policy has concentrated on fostering political unity and on integrating regional and provincial economies. Originally our transportation system was developed with the object of covering vast distances, moving goods and people from one point to another, coast to coast, at a reasonable cost. Various federal governments since Confederation have concentrated on policies designed to equalize opportunities and benefits available in all Canada's provinces and regions. As this country continued to grow, its transportation problems increased. The simplistic notion upon which our transportation system was originally based is no longer valid. The federal government has failed to realize that in 1972, transportation in Canada takes on a different connotation. Hon. gentlemen opposite have not taken action with the future of Canada in mind when developing their transportation policy.

In order to play a major part in future development, transportation decisions must be based on public need rather than political expediency. Air pollution, highway and airport congestion, the swallowing up of valuable urban land by expressways and growing noise pollution, should all play major parts in any decisions relating to transport policy today. Unfortunately, the government has seemingly disregarded this concept, basing its policy decisions on an economic evaluation of financial profitability. This is a mistake, and current trends in transportation are a tragedy because the mistakes of the past are being perpetuated on an even larger scale.

The greatest problem arises through lack of direction on the part of the government, and it shows in the quality of passenger and freight transportation across this country. Transportation policy is unco-ordinated. Systems of air, rail and highway transport are not integrated and the government takes refuge in constitutional hassles to hide the fact that it has no answers. The most recent example, I suppose, was the conclusions arrived at by the Railway Transport Committee after its visit to southern Ontario. The longest hassle, I suppose, has occurred over the implementation of Part IV of the National Transportation Act.

A glaring example of lack of co-ordination in transportation policies can be found in the case of Air Canada. Here is a Crown corporation owned by, and supposedly designed to serve, the Canadian public. Yet it provides a haphazard service, often at the expense of the Canadian taxpayer in terms of time and money. I draw attention to the rapid deterioration in passenger reservation services