

Transportation Policies

flight must continue through to Matagami which means the plane cannot fly Montreal through Val-d'Or and return.

The effect of that condition is that Nordair must cancel the flight when weather conditions are unfavourable between Montreal and Matagami. Even if there is perfect weather between Montreal and Val-d'Or, only Val-d'Or passengers are prevented from taking that flight. That condition in Nordair's licence is unfair in my view and in the company's also. I feel that the Canadian Transport Commission, if they have the interests of northwestern Quebec residents at heart, must delete that condition and allow Nordair to use jets.

In fact, the only thing that prevents the company from using jets or faster planes is the fact that the Matagami airport cannot handle that type of plane. As a result, passengers on the Montreal-Val-d'Or line do without the comfort of jets merely because of that restriction written in on Nordair's permit. I trust the commission is willing to cancel that condition which deprives the people in northwestern Quebec from quality service in that field.

Mr. Speaker, those are the few remarks I wanted to make at this point in the debate on the motion before the House today. As for the other airlines, I should merely like to ask the minister what is going on today with the discussions the Chibougamau people had with the former Minister of Transport, as well as the present minister, about the Chibougamau airport which, it will be remembered, we in northwestern Quebec, at the time of the 1974 election, when the then minister went about the area—

● (1720)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent. Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. D. M. Collenette (York East): Mr. Speaker, before I get into my remarks it is interesting to note that the motion before the House reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the transportation policies of this government have failed to meet the needs of urban and rural Canada.

This is a very serious charge indeed for the Conservative party to make, Mr. Speaker, yet at this hour they have but three members sitting in this Chamber. I am sorry, four. This is the party which brought this motion before us today, and there are only four or five of its members present in the Chamber. I consider that to be an absolute disgrace.

● (1730)

An hon. Member: There is also one member behind the curtain.

Mr. Collenette: Can the people of Canada believe in the sincerity of this motion when the opposition cannot muster the required number of members to listen to the debate, no matter

which side is speaking? It indicates the great disarray which is evident on the other side.

Before getting into the basic meat of my remarks, the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Whiteway) made a very serious charge. Unfortunately he has left the Chamber and will not be able to hear my remarks. I find that to be quite discourteous on his part. He made the charge that hon. members who were in the Atlantic region last week with the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications—the hon. member for Restigouche (Mr. Harquail), the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin), the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Landers), and myself—were flatly opposed to the government's transportation policies, especially with reference to the user-pay concept. This is not true, and the record will show that none of the four members who were in the House at that time made those remarks. Before the hon. member for Selkirk makes any future charges, I think he should check his facts.

The eclectic nature of this motion is such that I can speak about any aspect of the transportation policy. The minister talked about a general transportation policy, the hon. member who introduced the motion talked about a transportation policy in the rural context, and the hon. member for Selkirk dealt extensively with urban transit. I do not want to repeat remarks I made on March 2 in this Chamber in regard to urban transit, although I will make a few references to what I said at that time. Along with the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Philbrook), I have been foremost on the government side in pressuring the government to come up somehow with some commitment in the field of urban and commuter transit.

The promises uttered by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in June, 1974, were somewhat unrealistic. If you add up all the costs of the promises announced, the government would be virtually bankrupt if they were implemented within a short span of time. On March 2 in the House I made an argument to the effect that we must partly discharge our obligations in order to preserve some good faith and credibility with Canadians in the larger cities, especially in metropolitan Toronto.

The charge has been made that the government has done nothing in the field of urban commuter transit, and this is another falsehood uttered by the opposition. Grants were first made available by the government in the fiscal year 1972-73 for research and demonstration projects. About a year and a half ago the government announced a program of capital assistance for various commuter projects. The first grant under this program was made available on April 1 of this year. The purpose of this program is to assist provincial and municipal authorities in designing and developing new technology, operations and innovations for urban transit. It was also to assist those authorities in the purchase of commuter vehicles and related facilities. The provisions of this program are manifold.

Under the Department of Transport Act, the Transportation Development Agency may enter into agreements with the provinces or municipalities to share the costs of transportation research over a set period of time. Besides providing financial support, the agency is to participate in the project, as a