

Speech from the Throne

• (1640)

1. The provinces will accept modifications in the blanket subsidization of intro-regional traffic subject to the strict qualification that a federal-provincial agency be empowered to administer transportation assistance from federal funds to selected industries within the Atlantic provinces.
2. Its initial step will be to extend the subsidy of 30 per cent to traffic moved by all modes and to pay it to the shipper.
3. The appointees to the agency must be residents of the Atlantic provinces.
4. The administrative offices of the agency must be located in the region.
5. The Atlantic Provinces recommend that the federal government maintain the freeze on Atlantic provinces rail rates until such time as the new regional transportation policy is effected.
6. The recommendations are important and essential. They are inter-related and designed to be implemented in their entirety. They must be implemented as soon as possible if transportation is to become a tool rather than an obstacle for regional economic development.

Mr. Speaker, the government did pay attention to part of what was proposed by the Atlantic premiers. It reduced the subsidy which was available within the selected territory from 20 per cent to 17 per cent and intends to reduce it by a further 2 per cent on April 1 of this year unless the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) makes some pronouncement to the contrary. It did not set up a funded agency of the type the premiers had requested. Instead, it set up an advisory agency with no funds of its own. It made no difference where the agency was located; there was no reason for it to have any office since it did not have any money to spend.

The premiers also suggested that the people appointed to this agency should be businessmen involved in the industry of the area. Instead, we got six civil servants. I am sure that in the course of their lifetime they have learned a great deal about the way in which a businessman faces the problem of transportation in the Atlantic region. One thing the government certainly failed to do was maintain the freeze of freight rates as requested in the submission. We know they did not do that, because since the freight rate freeze was lifted in September, 1969, we have been subject to eight freight rate increases in the Atlantic region. These have resulted in increases which have forced shippers in the region to bear increases of between 32 and 62 per cent. If, as presently anticipated, the intra-regional subsidy is reduced on April 1 from 17 per cent to 15 per cent, the shippers in Atlantic Canada will face their ninth freight rate increase, an increase of 3.4 per cent.

Nothing has worked because nothing of value has been tried. Yes, we are given DREE grants for the establishment of new industries, just as they are provided to about every other area in the country. But there has been nothing new, nothing suggesting the type of policy which was the hallmark of the Diefenbaker administration.

An hon. Member: Thank goodness for that.

Mr. Coates: An hon. member over there says "Thank goodness for that." Let me tell him through you, Mr. Speaker, that there has never been a government in Canada's history which was as good a friend to the Atlantic provinces as the Diefenbaker administration.

[Mr. Coates.]

An hon. Member: Only some dumbbell from Ontario would make a statement like that.

Mr. Gibson: Speak for yourself. Use your own whistle.

Mr. Coates: I don't know where he came from but you can have him. People in Atlantic Canada are well able to compare the efforts of the Diefenbaker administration with those of Lester Pearson or of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). They know that in the person of my hon. friend from Halifax (Mr. Stanfield), with his background of achievement, there will soon be a prime minister in Ottawa who is familiar with the area and its people and who will apply the policies necessary to do the job. They now wait only for the opportunity to give him the job.

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): I want to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that everybody in the country knows that we have a terrible government governing us at the present time.

Mr. Gibson: Except the people.

Mr. Yewchuck: I shall, therefore, not spend too much time telling you how terrible they really are. I am sure you already know that, Mr. Speaker.

An hon. Member: More gloom and doom.

Mr. Osler: Tell us what you would do.

Mr. Yewchuck: I am invited by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Osler) to tell him what we would do. That is exactly what I want to do. I want to speak in a strictly positive way. I want to speak on the subject of Senate reform.

An hon. Member: Have them elected.

Mr. Yewchuck: I think we all agree that Senate reform is necessary. As a matter of fact we have hard statements to this effect from members of all parties in the House from time to time in the four years during which I have been here.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We do not advocate Senate reform. We advocate its abolition.

Mr. Yewchuck: Abolition is really a kind of reform, if you look at it in the true sense of the word. I should like to remind some of the members to my left that they do have representation in the other place.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Oh, no.

An hon. Member: What about Hazen Argue?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): He is not one of us.

Mr. Yewchuck: Although they do not publicly acknowledge it, a lot of them have a secret desire to go there. I want to suggest a formula which will make it easier for them to get into the Senate without losing face, since they have taken an extreme position from time to time on this subject.