

*Transportation Policies*

I would like to draw the minister's attention to what is happening in my city of Winnipeg where the provincial government has paid half of the losses of the transit system for the last number of years, and is paying for half the cost of new buses purchased by the Winnipeg Transit System. Even though that policy would seem to cost money, it will help to wean and encourage people to leave their own cars at home and use the public transit system, which is much less costly in terms of cost and much more efficient in the use of gasoline or diesel fuel necessary to move a customer from one place to another.

We have had a complete repudiation by the government of promises made in 1974 during the election campaign. These promises were listened to by the people of Canada, and particularly the people of urban Canada, as they elected Liberal members to office, which gave the government a majority. That is all I have to say with regard to the lack of policy by the government in terms of urban transit.

In July, 1973, at a time when we had a minority government and at a time when the Liberal government listened to people outside its own ranks, the four western premiers met in Calgary for what they called the Western Economics Opportunities Conference. There were three NDP premiers and a Conservative premier in attendance at that conference in Alberta. Despite the fact that they had, and still have, substantial differences in their political philosophies, they agreed on a large number of issues. One of the major agreements they reached was on some of the changes which were required in national transportation policies. They published a document outlining some of the things which they believed needed doing. I should like to put on the record some of the proposals they made, which were greeted with a good deal of interest and verbal support by the then minister of transport who said publicly, at the time or about that time, that the transportation system in this country was a mess.

Some of the proposals made by the western premiers were as follows:

National policy must recognize that an efficient and adequate transportation system, making the best use of all available modes of transportation, is essential for the economic and social well-being of Canada and its various regions. National transportation policy must recognize that competition at present acts unevenly between the various regions of Canada and between large and small users of transportation services. As a consequence, the development of the western region of Canada is inhibited by the lack of positive policy direction and the discrimination inherent in our present system of freight rates.

They asked for amendments to the National Transportation Act, something which has not been done. They said the following with regard to regional development:

● (1620)

To utilize cost information which will be available, a new approach to rail pricing is required which involves:

- (a) A federal contribution to the fixed and overhead costs of comparable proportions for all modes of transportation,
- (b) The establishment of a new rate-setting procedure which will promote the economic development of western Canada. This pricing policy is to be developed by the Western Transportation Evaluation Authority to be established immediately . . .

Every effort must be made to ensure that local western industry is protected and that no part of western Canada is unduly disadvantaged by the implementation of a new pricing technique. This requires the completion of indepth impact studies before any new method becomes effective. Export rates must be protected and statutory grain rates maintained. The Western Transportation Evaluation Authority will co-ordinate the implementation of any new pricing technique.

When I reread that report today I found it sounded familiar. It seems to me that I had heard that same kind of thing from another source, and I so looked to the news stories that were written after Mr. Justice Hall issued his report, almost four years after the Western Economic Opportunities Conference made the recommendations from which I have quoted. Here is what Nick Hills reported, in dealing with the Hall Commission report in a news story which appeared in the *Winnipeg Tribune* of May 18, 1977. He said the following with reference to Mr. Justice Hall's report:

He has upheld the hallowed Crowsnest Pass freight rate and, indeed, says it should be expanded to cover all agricultural products exported out of this region.

He has said, like the western premiers in every political strife, that the raw materials should be processed here—and not in central Canada. He has inferred, again like the western premiers, that the railways engage in duplicity—for having settled the west originally, they now want to settle the future, again to their advantage.

Then Nick Hills said, and I want to draw this particularly to the attention of the Minister of Transport:

Mr. Justice Hall has gone almost all the way to meeting the arguments of the western premiers that the railways and Ottawa between them are the barriers to a new economic future, based on fairer tariff, tax and freight-rate policies.

In other words, what Mr. Justice Hall has done is in fact to repudiate all the policies which the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) has been following since he became the minister.

The directions in which we should go are clear, both in terms of urban transportation and rapid transit, in terms of commuter transportation such as the GO system and the kind of commuter service that they have had and will not have if the government permits the railways to increase the rates and discontinue the service that they have provided into the city of Montreal, and in terms of reorganization, rationalization, and planning of our rail system in western Canada.

I suggest to the minister that if the same kind of study as Mr. Justice Hall has done for western Canada were done in the maritimes, we would get the same kinds of recommendations to rationalize the system, to use the railways, to stop charging cost against the railways which are not calculated in the use of an airline buses or trucks. In other words, what Mr. Justice Hall has said, and what the western premiers were saying in 1973 is that what we need is a co-ordination of all our methods of transportation, of rails, buses, airlines, trucks and private passenger cars, so we get the most efficient use of all modes of transport so that the people will benefit, rather than one group as compared to another. We have not had that kind of thinking by the Minister of Transport and I do not believe we will have it. It is for that reason that I and my party support the motion before us today.

It is not too late. The minister can rethink his policies; he can begin to use the kind of broad policies advocated by the western premiers and by Mr. Justice Hall, and he can begin to