

Transportation Policy

Transportation Act of 1967 has been a failure. The act was designed to take the question of transportation out of politics and put it into the hands of what was described as some kind of objective board which would base its decisions on economics rather than on politics. Now it seems that we are back to where we were in 1967 and that the policy of basing transportation consequences and effects on economic judgments has been a failure of the minister, by bringing information to us indicating that he wants to take over the way it was before 1967.

● (1700)

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear that, while the hon. member received a pile of documents this morning, he probably did not have time to go through all of them, because many of the questions which have been discussed in the House are clarified there. I do not say that everyone will be satisfied, but many things will be clarified.

The hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre says that we are bringing back the principle of competition in the field of transportation only in one sector and this is the thing that struck him the most. He said that this was the problem in the act of 1967 because in many fields and in many regions in Canada there was no competition at all. In southern Ontario one can use trucking, rail or aircraft and there is real competition. On the track which goes up to Hudson Bay, for example, who is competing? No one. So we say that where there is competition, let us have competition. We want regulations, to be in a position to intervene in all cases. This is quite a difference and I think the hon. member should keep that in mind. We want to modify the situation where there is no competition, where the competition is not efficient or where there is collusion. We want to have the power, under the law, to say that in a particular region the rates will be fixed following government intervention.

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Speaker, this will not really be a supplementary question because I did not receive an answer to the question I asked. I realize that the question put by my colleague was of equal importance and of great interest, but the minister did not really answer my question. I was not asking the minister about competition, although that is an important question; I was asking him whether we are not back to where we were in 1967. I wanted some indication from the minister as to how the things he is proposing today are different from what we had in 1967 before we brought in the transportation act. While he takes a lot of time to point out that we are really not going back and really not doing what we were in 1967, the effect of his proposals is to get rid of the transportation act as it now exists and to go back to making judgments about transportation on a political basis rather than on some economic basis.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): We are not going back to 1967. If we were, we would go back even further, because when the act was passed in 1967 Mr. MacPherson had completed his report, which was on the basis of facts he studied in 1961 or 1962. This was the problem he was trying to solve. We are going to correct the 1967 National Transportation Act so that we can correct the anomalies in freight rates and have a better integrated system. My

[Mr. Saltsman.]

speech this afternoon did not include the whole policy, because I discussed inter-city trains, commuter trains and other things. All this will be part of the package when we come back before the House. It is still being studied by the cabinet and by the provinces. So if the hon. member is asking me if we are going back to 1967, no, we are not. We are going back, to a certain extent, on certain points.

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Speaker, if I may ask my supplementary now, it will be a supplementary because the minister referred to the high-speed rail demonstration service in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. The minister knows that we did have such a high-speed rail service, certainly from Windsor to Toronto and, I presume, from there on, and that was discontinued. It was on the CPR tracks, the CPR made an application to discontinue that passenger service and it was discontinued. Now we have the CN going from Windsor to Toronto, and then on. The question for the minister is this: If he is going to experiment with a high-speed service, does this mean he is prepared to shift the rail passenger service which is going from Windsor to Toronto on to the faster and more direct track of the CPR?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I think that was given in my speech as an example. The corridor from Quebec City to Windsor was just mentioned. It is a natural corridor in Canada; there is no doubt about that. These are not the only places in Canada; there is Vancouver and Halifax which are very important cities.

Mr. Marshall: Go a little farther than Nova Scotia.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): And jump on to the island? Perhaps we can do that. We have an experiment, but that is not the kind of experiment we want to do. What we want to do is something quite different with regard to a new type of train which is faster, and we hope that those trains will be used by the population. As the hon. member very well knows, many of the trains which were abandoned were not used at all by the population. They were used by a percentage which was negligible. If we can put better and faster trains on those tracks, as they are doing in Europe and many other places, perhaps we can change the results. It is easier to get into Paris by train than to get into Toronto by train.

Mr. Murta: Mr. Speaker, my question is basically supplementary to the question just asked. I would like to ask the minister how the proposed high-speed rail service from Quebec City to Windsor is to be integrated with the other services already involved in that corridor. Also, unless I missed the answer, could he give us the time-frame that he or his partners are thinking about with regard to instituting this kind of service?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I hope that in committee we will have time to discuss all these points. We have no specific programs for those trains. It is a fundamental principle that we want to integrate the modes of transportation in Canada. Hon. members very well know that we would have better co-ordination by using buses, trains, airlines, and so forth. We are not limited to one mode of transportation. This is something we want to do and it is a program we want to develop. I do not know whether this answers the hon. member's question. I would ask hon.