

National Capital Region

the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that we should not kill this motion by praising it too much or too long.

Since the motion was presented last year, the problem of urban transportation in this area has worsened. The public concern and awareness of this problem has grown and developed. I thought it might be of interest to the House to know that one survey has been conducted in Nepean township, which I represent, which lies to the south and west of Ottawa.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A very important area.

Mr. Blair: A very important area because some very distinguished members of this House live there. This township has literally no public transportation. There are more than 60,000 people living there and the need for proper public transport is great, if only to satisfy the convenience of the residents and their economy. There are other reasons, however, which have been mentioned by my hon. friend from Ottawa West. There is the problem of responsible planning and the problem of pollution which make the development of an integrated transport system in the capital area of a very high priority to all of us.

Last May and June the young people who were members of my political association, on their own initiative, undertook the task of calling on every home in Nepean township to discuss with residents the problem of pollution which exists in our society. One of the problems they discussed with the citizens, which was widely remarked upon in the amazing number of replies I got from residents in the township, was that of urban public transport. The point that I can make now with absolute certainty as a result of this survey is that there is great public support, great public demand and a real desire for the development of proper urban transport facilities in the total capital area, and particularly in that part which I represent.

One of the people who replied to the survey stated that the automobile was a 3,400 pound piece of tin which carries one person 15 miles per gallon. The conclusion reached by this survey was that we must deglamourize the private automobile and look for alternatives. The only alternative, of course, is the provision of a proper system of urban transport. It is not sufficient to make arbitrary rules against the automobile and its use unless at the same time proper facilities are provided for public transport and an educational campaign is undertaken to ensure that the public will use a new transport system. The encouraging thing about this survey is that the people understand the problem and are prepared not only to support urban public transport in this area but to make the necessary adjustments in their life style and habits to make that public transport successful.

Much more could be said, Mr. Speaker, but I share the desire of all hon. members that this matter be brought to a vote. I think it might be of assistance to hon. members who represent areas outside the capital region if I referred to the brief submitted by the Canadian Federa-

[Mr. Blair.]

tion of Mayors and Municipalities to the government of Canada on April 26, 1971. This brief dealt with a number of municipal and planning problems and a substantial section of it was devoted to the planning and development of transportation. A striking conclusion advanced in the brief may be of interest to hon. members, and I shall quote from page 9:

As a positive gesture toward dealing with Canada's urban transportation problems we recommend that the federal government express its commitment to share in the funding with the provincial and local governments concerned of a number of experimental transportation projects involving a variety of sizes of communities. We suggest that the federal government agree to having the choice of the location of the experiments and the cost sharing arrangements decided by the participants at the forthcoming tri-level conference.

Such a project would be of immeasurable benefit to all communities with transportation problems since it would provide tangible and practical results in a context assuring that all aspects of transportation planning in these experimental cases would be reported nationally. Let us capitalize on our problems by dealing with them experimentally rather than engage in debate over the validity of untried alternatives.

That is the end of the quotation, Mr. Speaker. I can think of no better place in the whole of Canada for a proper experiment to be undertaken in the development of urban transport than in the national capital region. It is for this reason also that I urge hon. members to support the motion.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Carried.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Clermont (Gatineau): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to delay the passing of the measure should the majority of members so desire. I intend to make a few comments only.

The hon. member who proposed this motion is no doubt aware of the fact that Quebec provincial authorities have appointed a Commission last fall to inquire into the public transportation problem in the Outaouais regional community. I hope that the federal government will decide to consult Quebec and Ontario authorities on the studies which have been completed or which are underway. If I am not mistaken, a study of public transportation on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River had already been conducted by the Dorion Commission.

There is no doubt in my mind that a reform of the public transportation scheme in the National Capital area is required. Hon. members know that the National Capital area does not include only the municipalities on the Ontario side but also those on the Quebec side; it also includes part of the constituency which I have the pleasure to represent in the House. Should the federal government decide to finance out of public funds a survey of public transportation in the National Capital area, I am sure that work already performed will be taken into consideration.

As far as I am concerned, I do not see why I should not support the motion from my hon. colleague from Ottawa West.