

transport. In any event, even if it is not designed to do that, the money to pay for the program will come from what the minister refers to as the elimination of inefficient subsidies.

I suggest this is a serious charge. I am surprised that the minister permitted his advisers to put him in this position. As I say, there is a ground well of resentment over this policy which is reflected in letters which come into my office every day and which come, I am sure, into the office of every Atlantic member of parliament. Moreover, I feel very strongly that this resentment is now just starting to grow. Mr. Mingo, the distinguished chairman of the Halifax-Dartmouth port commission, put it this way the other day. He said that, contrary to the view of many in Canada, we in Atlantic Canada do not enjoy overwhelming subsidies. The port of Halifax, for example, enjoys only the subsidy of the "at and east" rates. We pay for everything else ourselves, apart from a small deficit resulting from the operation of the port.

To cut us out of passenger services will be doing not only the Atlantic provinces but Canadians in the 1980's a disservice. If what we are led to believe is about to come to pass, we will not have sufficient energy supplies in the maritimes. The energy that we do have will price transportation—vehicles, cars, buses, airplanes—beyond the means of the average Canadian. For example, we know that Air Canada is programming itself to carry no one but businessmen after 1982 or 1983, apart from a handful of jet setters who can afford to fly in any event. Certainly Air Canada will not be carrying, Mr. Speaker, my mother, your grandmother, your niece, uncle or children from Halifax to Regina, from Regina to Saskatoon, or from British Columbia back to Ontario for a vacation, because they will be unable to afford the fare. We are told costs are increasing too rapidly.

Why at this point in time are we downgrading rail travel as a means of moving passengers from one part of Canada to another? More important, are we doing it because the minister has directed that this be done? Why has he undermined the work of the railway transport committee? Why has he undermined the work presently being commenced by Dr. Sullivan in Newfoundland? Why is he so insistent, for the sake of \$8 million to \$12 million a year, on getting us out of the one mode of moving passengers—rail—on which, according to every shred of evidence of in front of us, we will have to rely in the early 1980's and certainly by the mid-1980's?

I do not understand, and the people of Atlantic Canada do not understand why we are cutting back when we should be attempting to improve and to upgrade our railways. We should be getting into electrification. We have to spend millions and millions of dollars on roadbed improvement, on continuing the welded rail concept. We need new switching, new signalling services. We must have better scheduling. Above all, we must have new rolling stock. If we undertake these improvements, passengers will come back to rail. Otherwise they will not move from rail to bus; they will move from rail to car, the most inefficient method of moving people around the country.

If my premise is wrong and we do have the energy to last till God only knows when—certainly to beyond our capacity to see

### *Transportation Policies*

into the future—then I wish somebody over on that side would stand up and say so. They have not done so. Instead, they confirm that we will be paying anywhere from double to triple the present cost of imported oil within the next six to eight years. This is why I cannot understand and, more important, why no one in the Atlantic provinces can understand how the minister can take such a stubborn position, how he can pre-judge the work of the railway transport committee, the work of Dr. Sullivan, not to mention the work of the standing committee of this House which hopefully will report its findings regarding Atlantic Canada in the not too distant future.

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, in light of the importance of this debate and of other matters that have occurred to me, I wonder whether the House would agree to call it six o'clock so we can resume at eight.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Is it so agreed?

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, the whip has just reminded me that we are having the late show at six, and there may be some difficulty in members reaching here.

**Mr. Paproski:** The hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) is here but the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt) is not.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** We have lost a considerable amount of parliamentary time on an opposition day by votes and other things. There are still ten minutes till six and I think we should proceed. Frankly, if you are asking is there unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, I will not give it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** There not being unanimous consent, I recognize the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that my good friend, the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), would have continued until six, because we would have given him the time had he wanted it.

**Mr. Paproski:** You are a big sport now.

**Mr. Benjamin:** I am sure all hon. members would agree that they hate to have to start a speech and then resume two hours later. That is why I asked for unanimous consent; I am sorry I was not able to get it.

I want to add to and reinforce some of the remarks made by my hon. friend who just spoke. I want to commence by saying that the motion he has on the order paper certainly meets with our approval and is similar to one which has been moved by opposition parties on numerous occasions over the nine years I have been here.

• (1750)

I want to mention specifically some items which I hope the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) will deal with when he rises in his place. I hope also that he will tell the House that he is prepared, if not to change his mind completely, at least to