

National Transportation Policy

At the conclusion of the conference or conferences, because I can see many of these being necessary, communiqués could be issued and then the final analysis conference should be held in the hope of hearing ideas about the direction our transportation policy should follow. I do not look for an overnight sensational announcement arising out of these conferences, nor do I see a headline to headline type of communiqué such as the press and other media would like to see because it provides good stories: I see this as a long, hard grind before decisions are reached. In the final analysis it might very well be the responsibility of the federal government to take the leadership role and make the decisions which must be made on a national transportation policy.

Mr. Paproski: We will look after it following the next election.

Mr. Cullen: I do not know how you will look after it, because you will be back in Edmonton. It is just possible that the tri-level, municipal-provincial-federal conference would be the best forum at which to discuss this particular problem. Certainly at such a conference finances and taxation would dominate. That is to be expected, because I am satisfied that municipalities need a larger share of the tax dollar and a better method of taxation or system of sharing in revenues than their present, almost total reliance on real estate taxes supplemented of course by provincial grants gained in large measure from the federal purse. But in addition to taxes and finances, transportation surely must rate high on the list of priorities of such a conference.

My second recommendation would be that the Department of Transport is too large a federal department, dealing as it does with land, sea and air, and therefore I would suggest that the department be headed by a minister of transport who has assigned to him two ministers of state, one responsible for air and the other responsible for land and sea.

Mr. Baldwin: Are you available?

An hon. Member: Are you looking for a job?

Mr. Cullen: I know I could do the job, but I am not preaching for a call. I am trying to make some positive suggestions.

An hon. Member: You are fixing yourself up for the next election.

Mr. Cullen: It is nice of the hon. member to say I am fixing myself for the next election, because he is conceding we will win. It might even be suggested that three ministers of state be appointed with one responsible for land, one responsible for sea and one responsible for air transportation. We in Canada are fortunate that we have such a splendid Minister of Transport at the helm at the present time. I think Mr. Tissington says it very well in his column which appears in the Thompson newspapers across Canada but which I read in the *Sarnia Observer*. Mr. Tissington, a reporter, had this to say on June 3 of this year:

The more I see transport minister Don Jamieson in action, the more I am impressed. The most recent wave of admiration

[Mr. Cullen.]

occurred following meetings of the Commons Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. Each session, Mr. Jamieson makes an appearance before that committee to be examined on his ministry's spending estimates for the current fiscal year.

This annual appearance took place here the other day with the committee meeting in the morning, in the afternoon and again in the evening. Mr. Jamieson appeared at all three meetings, accompanied each time by a retinue of officials from his department. Some idea of the size and scope of the ministry of transport can be grasped from the fact that no fewer than 20 of these officials were on hand at the meetings, from the deputy minister to assistant deputy ministers, head of various branches—

This is why I say the department is too large and too great a responsibility for one man, although fortunately we have the right man at the helm. The article continues:

Once in a while Mr. Jamieson refers a question to one of the experts but I get the impression he only does this to give them something to do or because he needs to pause for a minute or two to regain his breath after answering the ten preceding questions single-handedly.

In conclusion, Mr. Tissington says that if the minister cannot answer some questions, perhaps a parochial question of minor import, it is only a matter of a day or two before the member is sent the answer. Mr. Tissington also states that it is little wonder the transport minister is so popular and respected by his Commons colleagues. I could not have said this better myself.

I should like to make one other recommendation for the consideration of the Minister of Transport. At the present time I believe there are between 40 and 55 applications lodged with the Canadian Transport Commission by Canadian National Railways to cease passenger transportation to various communities in Canada. It is known by everyone that the CNR has no intention of abandoning this passenger service. But in order to secure the subsidy which it seeks, it is necessary for the company to appear before the Canadian Transport Commission with an application to abandon rail passenger service.

It seems to me it would be extremely simple to agree to an amendment so that when a railway company is applying for a subsidy it should have the right to go the direct route. In this way the local municipalities, chambers of commerce, citizens—and railway unions, for that matter—could support the railway in its application and it would be in their best interests to do so. The public relations benefits to be derived from such a procedure are self-evident.

However, when a railway sincerely wished or found it necessary to abandon a passenger service, it should make direct application to do so. In these instances the municipalities, chambers of commerce, railway unions, passengers and others could present their briefs in opposition to such an application. The opponents of such an application might very well establish that the passenger service could run, if it were subsidized, so the project could be dropped in the second category and a subsidy provided. Surely, however, the time has come to stop placing the railway companies in the position where they apply for the abandonment of a line in order to secure a subsidy.

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These, then, in capsule form, are my recommendations: First, a national conference, probably using the tri-level