

particularly true if we look at the additional charges on oil shipments, when they are brought into the picture.

On October 8 last year the minister stated in reply to a question put by the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Thomas):

I cannot do the latter, that is, announce the make-up of the nine port authorities. I can say, however, that most of the problems have been resolved.

• (1630)

In the Atlantic region, Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for the local Port Authority. We are waiting to see whether it can foster the pride suggested by the Glassco commission some nine years ago. Not only are we waiting for the degree of decentralization which the present minister has designed to give to ports so far, but there are considerable fears that the new local Port Authority will in practice only add yet another level of administration. The best we are promised—and promised and promised and promised—falls far short of the effective decentralization envisioned and recommended by the Glassco commission. It is difficult to imagine that the time delay, even under a local Port Authority, in port capital development projects would be shorter than at present, with the submission requirements for annual budgets, closest co-operation with the provincial government, national objectives and guidelines, not to mention the minister not being able to make up his mind.

Such is the dynamic speed with which the Minister of Transport acts that in his May 12, 1971, statement to the House he was able to reiterate the following vague outline some eight years after the Glassco Royal Commission reported:

Details concerning the responsibilities and make-up of each of these authorities will be worked out through consultation.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? It is exactly what we want?

In general terms, I can say that each group will be as representative as possible of all local interests, including management and labour, municipal and provincial authorities. Each will have a good deal of autonomy, including consultation in the appointment of port managers—

Hah!

—the preparation of budgets, forward planning and all other important matters.

When compared with the minister's statement a year before at the Transport and Communications Committee on April 9, 1970, we are able to see clearly the inability of the minister to make a significant advance in the decentralization of the administration of the ports of this country.

In fairness to the minister, he did indicate that he felt the big problem was trying to define the levels of responsibility and authority both of the local manager, or whatever it would be titled, and the national body. That is a direct quote, "of the national body". I thought we were going to decentralize but here we are talking about a national body. The minister went on to say:

This is an extremely intricate arrangement and, as I said this morning, I do not believe that you can apply it in precisely the same way at every port across the country—you have to take local conditions into account.

CNR and Air Canada

Mr. Speaker, a principle is a principle. How it is applied in different areas may differ but the principle remains. Either it is hollow or it is not.

As recently as October 8, 1971, the Minister of Transport stated:

It is the intention of the government to locate one member of the National Harbours Board in the Atlantic provinces, but where he will go is the key question, as the hon. member well knows.

If the location of the regional member of the National Harbours Board is a key question, he will obviously be important in the determination of port policy and decisions. If he is that important, it is also evident that the decentralization is not intended to be significant. The minister cannot have it both ways simultaneously.

Either the regional National Harbours Board representative will be important or we will have effective decentralization. This would place in the hands of our communities the major portion of the responsibility for the operation of those ports.

Yet, decentralization is essential if we are to avoid the kind of federal mismanagement which led to the development of two container berths at the south end of Halifax over opposition and in face of the accusation that you are rushing out to do something because somebody said it had to be done. I agree that it had to be done and it has given Halifax a significant jump in capturing containerization markets in North America. We wanted that and we welcome it, but I still make the point that the absence of a local authority led to what most people in the Halifax area agree was an unwise location. Now, we have prospects of an immediate expansion of this capability at an alternative site which should have been developed initially and which would have been capable of expansion. At least ten berths could have been provided at one site instead of the split site operation now to be imposed on the port of Halifax-Dartmouth. At present it is difficult to see how the limited decentralization promised by the minister and as yet not realized in the Atlantic provinces will be able to resist adequately the present government's penchant for error and short sightedness. I hope they will not repeat the errors that have been made to date with respect to the management of our ports.

In view of the many disadvantages suffered by the Maritimes, it is something of a blow to find that geographical nearness to European markets is no advantage since it is costing shippers at the Montreal railhead the same as at the Halifax terminal to send goods to Europe. This, despite the \$80 to \$85 cost of sending a 20-foot container from Montreal to Halifax. How do you rationalize these things?

The whole transport policy of the government must be clearly stated so that informed criticisms and economic responses may be made, particularly by the people directly affected. In recent days in this House we have heard members from the western provinces pleading for box-cars to move their grain to market. Why have we not got them?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forrestall: We get excuses such as in wintertime this or that cannot be done. That is nonsense. You do it. If