

of the subsidies we have been studying is the Maritime Freight Rates Act and the Atlantic Region Freight Assistance Act covering the Atlantic region and the Gaspé coast. After discussions with the provincial authorities we decided that the existing subsidy for movement within the region did not provide the maximum possible economic benefit for the region, and in turn we agreed that a subsidy should be paid on selected regionally-produced goods moving by all modes of transportation. This subsidy will be implemented by September 1 on a selected list of commodities, such as those I mentioned earlier in my remarks.

Turning to aviation for a moment, a significant period of development is being seen for the Atlantic region in this area. This will include a new terminal building, a maintenance garage and firehall, and eventually a new 5,000 foot runway at the Charlottetown airport. The project, developed in consultation with provincial and municipal authorities, will cost more than \$21 million, and work is expected to begin early this summer. Other improvements for the airport include a new maintenance garage, aircraft apron, taxiways, a car park, an access road system and field electrical installations.

Gander airport in Newfoundland will be receiving a new air control centre, an expansion to its air terminal building and improvements to the north runway. The completed project will cost an estimated \$18 million. A new maintenance garage and firehall will be built at St. John's airport at a cost of \$1.5 million over the next two years.

● (1612)

I am delighted to report that on April 17 we will see the inauguration of the new terminal building to be constructed at Charlo airport in Restigouche, which will be the last of a multiphase program that has witnessed the extension of the runway to 6,000 feet to receive jets, the construction of a modern maintenance garage with firehall at a cost of \$850,000 and electronic facilities for instrument control landing services. This brings the total expenditure on the Charlo airport to about \$6.5 million.

These facts and figures which I have been able to bring to the House this afternoon clearly demonstrate more than just the concern of the government, but the type of planning, vision and study that has gone into this most important aspect of government responsibility, particularly in the Atlantic area. As I mentioned earlier, it does surprise me when members do not take the opportunity to point out the significant developments that have been taking place in their areas through the direction of the Minister of Transport and his department.

Recently the Minister of Transport has come on strong in meeting these demands and finding answers to the problems that we are faced with in the Atlantic area. I have had the opportunity to question various officials in the transportation field as they appeared before the transportation committee regarding air passenger service in the Atlantic area, and I have received assurances from Mr. Benson of the CTC and the Minister of Transport himself that discussions will take place in terms of EPA and Air Canada to work out a rationalized

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service that will see all citizens in the Atlantic area have an equal opportunity to travel, not only within the four Atlantic provinces but to other parts of Canada as well. It is of great interest to me that citizens in the Atlantic area are able to enjoy the advantage of moving economically, efficiently and conveniently to other parts of Canada and the world as well.

As I said when I began my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be able to respond to this resolution this afternoon and at the same time place some facts about transportation on the record.

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, I love these crowded afternoons! One has the feeling that there is a tremendous audience in the galleries and in the House hanging upon every utterance of hon. members, and that inspires us to do our best. It is regrettable that the fourth estate, which seems to regard this place as nothing more than theatre, abandons always, and almost in total, the Friday matinee. I have often thought in my 21 years here that the greatest problem of the press gallery, and they have many, is that many of its members are brought up from the police beat, and since it is not always so clear to distinguish between the accused and the accuser in this House, they quite often do not really perceive what is going on.

I want to congratulate the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie) for bringing up for consideration this Friday afternoon a topic which is as old as confederation and, indeed, older. Our people in the sea-bound provinces have troubled themselves about this situation. They studied and debated it and brought their great, constructive suggestions and inquiries to the national legislature after the dominion was formed. It is very significant that the hon. gentleman should interlace this particular question of transportation with the concept of regional economic disparity. It pleases me that the very distinguished Canadian, the former premier of Nova Scotia, the Hon. G. I. Smith, was the man who brought to the dominion-provincial constitutional discussions the question of regional economic disparity. It is the kind of question which a federation should, properly be seized with as it studied the problems of the confederation.

It always was, but it is only recently that it has been recognized as, a profound truth that no national economy is strong or vibrant if the regional components thereof are weak or disorganized. I am not nearly as happy with things as the speaker who preceded me. The best remark he made was that even his party now recognizes that the user-pay concept really never was much good and should be decently and hurriedly interred, and for that I congratulate him.

I thought that my colleague from York-Sunbury brought forward some constructive suggestions, and I am appalled that we have allowed the advantages of the Atlantic region to lapse. We were brought in, and, indeed, urged—some would say seduced—into confederation 100 and some years ago because of our location. We were in the corridors of commerce; we had the great ice-free ports. Now all this has been lost. Our wonderful merchant navy has withered away. I have said in the Chamber before that whenever I travel abroad, because