

Transportation Policies

movement of people in the Atlantic provinces. Such movement in and out of the Atlantic provinces was prejudged and predicted by the Minister of Transport. He offered us \$125 million—\$100 million to upgrade our roadbeds, \$20 million to upgrade our buses, and \$4 million to upgrade our air services. The council of maritime premiers or the Atlantic provinces regional transportation committee has asked the government for \$1 billion and not \$100 million. They feel they need that over the next eight or ten years to achieve what the Minister of Transport has suggested is going to be achieved in the next three or four years.

It is going to cost \$260 million to fix up the potholes in the TransCanada Highway from St. John's to Port aux Basques. Are we to wait ten years, 20 years, or 30 years to have that done? What do they think we are in the Atlantic provinces? Where does Canada begin? If someone in St. John's wants to take a train ride from one end of this country to the other, he cannot. He has to take a bus. The minister has had his way for the first 1,800 miles, lopping off rail service. He has to go by bus all the way to Montreal, get off the bus there and get on a train.

I see the minister is indicating no. The report recommends eliminating all of that train service which will save \$30 million a year. He wants to give us \$100 million a year and save \$9 million, \$10 million or \$12 million by eliminating the run between Halifax and Sydney on the Valley highway, the Saint John River valley train, the train through western New Brunswick, through Maine and through Sherbrooke on into Montreal. Where is that money going? Will that be new money coming into the Atlantic region? The thrust of what I am saying is that this is neither reasonable nor acceptable as an alternative.

The only people who will be travelling by air in ten years time will be businessmen and probably members of parliament. I hope the people of this country have sense enough to stay away from that expensive mode of transportation. They should use the train, or hitchhike. We will not be able to afford to drive our cars in ten years, if what we are being told is true. We will not have the energy. If the energy is there in terms of gas and oil, we will not be able to afford to use it. It will be too expensive for the average person.

Faced with this, what are we doing? We are abandoning our capacity to haul passengers by rail and substituting it with buses. Of course we need good bus service. I have never heard it said that we do not have good bus service. I have never heard it said by anybody until we were told so by a group of IBIs and ADIs or whoever they are. I wonder what they got paid. Any good research assistant of any member of the House of Commons could have read that in 30 minutes and been a lot more accurate in the writing of it. For the minister to try to fob that off as a rationalization and a justification for a position the government has adopted with respect to how people in the Atlantic provinces are going to travel, is a sad mistake. It will not be accepted.

I have been railing here for the past few minutes, but in conclusion I would like to refer to the Atlantic Region Inter-

[Mr. Forrestall.]

Modal Passenger Study on which the minister's program is based. It fails to compare costing for rail on the same basis as that for air and road. It ignores the extremely expensive infrastructure such as highways and airports which are required for the latter two modes of transportation. It assumes that present rail patrons will shift to buses once trains are removed. No evidence for such an assumption exists. Indeed experience indicates that such passengers will turn to energy wasteful automobiles or airplanes. The claim that buses are not more energy efficient than trains may be true in certain instances. For example, the government drives people away from trains, thus forcing the railways to operate trains with a limited number of passengers on them.

The noted environmental scientist, Barry Commoner, makes a strong case for a return to the rails in his most recent book, "The Poverty of Power". I commend it to the minister and some of the members opposite. He points out that the train is by far the most efficient energy user—630 passenger miles per million BTUs compared with 340 for buses, 120 for airplanes and 110 for private autos. More important, the train is the only mode of transportation, apart from small electric cars, that lends itself to electrification for the mass movement of people.

The report makes no reference to factors in which the rail mode excels, namely, comfort, security, safety, and ease of convenience for those who are aged or crippled, and for the youth of our country. It treats the improvement of rail service as excluding improvements to other modes, creating a false impression that better air and bus service are dependent upon rail cutbacks. The study's answer to more efficient inter-modal transportation seems to be to drop one of the modes.

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Finally, it asserts that rail ridership continues to decline. In fact this trend has reversed quite decisively, based on the most recent figures available to us. I commend to members a reading of the brief presented by Canadian National Railways to the railway transport committee in Halifax about ten days or two weeks ago.

I have dealt with the savings that allegedly we are going to make out of moving away from rail to bus. I have dealt with the fact that this is not new money. I would ask the minister rhetorically what happens to the lost revenue and to the lost taxes paid by the hundreds of employees who will be thrown out of a job as a result of this move. How will this money be replaced by dollars and cents already in place in our community? We want answers to some of these questions.

There is a ground swell of resentment toward the posture adopted, accidentally or otherwise, by the government. I am not suggesting the minister had control over the timing of the appearance of the railway transport committee in the maritime region, but I am suggesting it is unacceptable to us to send such a distinguished group of commissioners as the railway transport committee to the Atlantic region to examine passenger travel in the area and, at the same time, announce a \$125 million program which is designed to move away from rail