

Transportation

There is no need to apologize for accepting the principle of freight subsidies as we have known them in the past. They have been necessary to compensate for the results of tariff policies of this country for the past century. It is in the national interest that various regions develop to the maximum. Let me refer to a specific case.

It was not in the national interest to allow the relocation of the overhaul base from Winnipeg to Montreal, simply because it was demonstrated on a cost basis alone that it would be cheaper to conduct that operation in Montreal as opposed to Winnipeg. In addition to a cost factor, one must also consider desirability. Surely it is desirable to have more than one jet overhaul service base in Canada; yet by simply looking at the cost factor it was decided that this skilled jet overhaul service should be consolidated in one area in this country.

One of the last things we would want to see happen in this country is a development whereby the economy and the population became increasingly centralized, to the point that some regions stagnate while one or two metropolitan areas in the country grow at a rapid rate. Such a development would create complex cities to the point where the phenomenon of megalopoly sets in. I do not think it is desirable to have one, two or three centres in the country growing at such a rate that problems in terms of urban life and living develop while at the same time other areas are relatively stagnant. We are all aware of the phenomenon that has occurred in Latin and central America, and some of the so-called banana republics, where the whole economic strength is concentrated in an area restricted to one city. This is an extreme illustration but I fear if we bring in transportation changes and policies based almost entirely on the concept of competition and private enterprise we will move somewhat in the same direction.

It must be a deliberate policy of the government to embrace transportation policy which will have the effect of giving various regional economies in this country sufficient assistance, by subsidies and in other ways, to allow them to enjoy a rate of growth comparable to other regions. This will in turn add to the strength of the whole nation.

Mr. A. B. Patterson (Fraser Valley): Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention tonight to go into detail on the bill now before us, but I

[Mr. Schreyer.]

should like to make some general observations in respect of its general purpose. We should have a national transportation policy enunciated and implemented in Canada. I do not intend to go into detail, as I have said, because my colleague, the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson), dealt at some length with the major parts of this bill which are causing concern.

● (8:10 p.m.)

I am sure that his concern and our concern has been shared and is being shared by a great many members or this house because of the far reaching effects that these proposed changes may have on our whole economy.

Over the years there has been an increasing cry for a national transportation policy. I believe this has been occasioned by changing conditions in our country, by the development of forms of transportation other than the one mainly under consideration at the present time—that is, rail transportation—and also by the failure of our transportation systems to meet the challenge of the present day. I am thinking especially of the movement of grain throughout the past months. We all remember that on a great many occasions those from the prairie provinces have constantly brought to the attention of the government the failure of our transportation systems to meet the need, so far as the transportation of grain products is concerned.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, when we consider the clamour that has been evident in days gone by it is rather difficult to reconcile the attitude taken, now that the government has enunciated a transportation policy. It may not be all that we desire, and certainly it is not. We all recognize that there are inadequacies in the measure now before us. I am sure that we all acknowledge the fact that further study will bring to light additional weaknesses that must be corrected if this policy and plan are to meet the need of Canada in this day and age. Therefore I believe that as we look at the bill before us we must look at it not as a finished product, not as something that is all cut and dried—I would not like to think of it as such—but as something like a working paper, if I may put it that way, that can be gone over, forming a basis for consideration, study and analysis; and then I trust the government will be prepared to accept recommendations, suggestions and amendments that this house believes will be necessary in order to make it an effective piece of legislation.